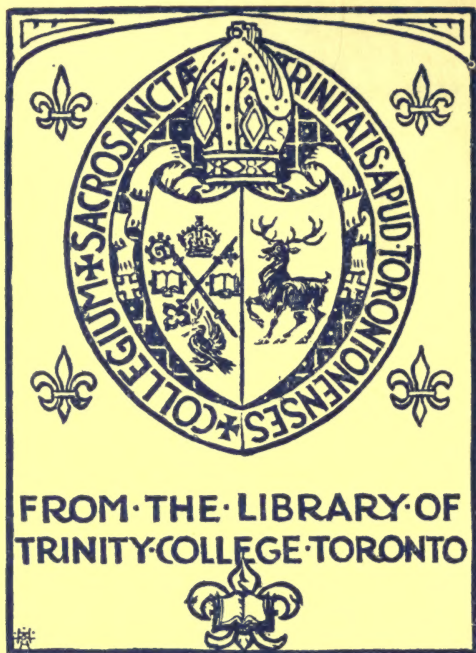


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SAC IN MYSTICAL THEOLOGY
ARTHUR CHANDLER



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BY PROFESSOR E.R. FAIRWEATHER.

ARA CŒLI

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

FAITH AND EXPERIENCE

THE CULT OF THE PASSING MOMENT

THE ENGLISH CHURCH AND RE-UNION

ARA CÆLI:

AN ESSAY IN MYSTICAL THEOLOGY

BY

ARTHUR CHANDLER

BISHOP OF BLOEMFONTEIN

AUTHOR OF "THE DIVINE OFFICE FOR HOLY WEEK"

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PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION

THERE are a few things which I should like to add in reference to reviews and notices of this book by the Press.

First, I want to apologise for the large number of misprints which appeared in the earlier editions. I am very much ashamed of them, and hope that they have now been corrected.

Secondly, some Roman Catholic papers, for whose friendly appreciation I am very grateful, note the omission of any reference to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. I can only plead that it is very difficult to recall, on reflection, the sum total of one's indebtedness, and I suppose that very often the authors to whom we owe most are least prominently in our minds, just because their ideas have soaked so deeply into us. I should like, then, to repair my neglect, and acknowledge gratefully the help which I have received from the Exercises, especially, I think, in the first two chapters of my book. But I must add, on the other hand, that the complicated scheme of meditation recommended by him is the sort of method against which I venture to argue in Chapter VII.

A further criticism from the same quarter is the

very natural one that, whereas I claim that the Anglican Church is the best sphere for the cultivation of mystical religion, the great bulk of my quotations are from Roman Catholic authors. That is perfectly true. But, in the first place, my words about the Anglican Church express an aspiration for the future, not a statement about the past or present. And, secondly, if I had wished to be controversial (which I particularly desired to avoid) I might have pointed out that, though the majority of my post-Reformation authorities, the only ones touched by this criticism, belonged to the Roman Church, many of them received scant encouragement from the authorities of that Church; in fact, some of them may be said to have been mystics in spite, and not in consequence, of their Romanism. If Molinos escaped being burnt, this fate was only exchanged for perpetual imprisonment; the canonisation of St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, who held much the same views, was a tardy compensation for much petty persecution during their lifetime; whilst the treatment of Madame Guyon is a later illustration of the same kind of attitude on the part of the official hierarchy. Over-organisation and suspicion seem to have dictated this attitude; and we may hope that, if the English Church remains free from these faults, and at the same time maintains her loyalty to the Faith and the ministry of grace, she will be allowed to train many of her children in the inner ways of spiritual experience.

Lastly, it has been said by one reviewer that I am guilty of a confusion of thought in making the term mysticism "synonymous with all spiritual-mindedness and vital religion." I hope I have not done so ; but the point is an important one for the understanding of mysticism, and I should like to say a few words on it. If we analyse what we mean by "vital religion" and "mystical religion," we see at once that they have a certain element in common, as distinguished from what may be called conventional religion. Vital religion implies that the man who possesses it accepts his Creed *ex animo*, is in earnest with his prayers and reverent in his use of the means of grace, and makes the life of Christ a real test and standard for his own conduct ; in fact, that he is guided and swayed by the action of the Holy Spirit in his heart. Vital religion is a religion which is "alive" and active, as opposed to one consisting mainly in dead faith and formal observances. But, then, life may be working, and bringing forth spiritual fruit, without being *felt* or *understood* in its comprehensive unity ; and it is here that the path of mystical religion diverges. The mystic, for instance, not only accepts the Creed with intellectual conviction, but feels it by a kind of spiritual intuition, which is at the same time both a principle of love and an appreciation of beauty. Further, mystical *theology* tries to understand this unity and the process of its manifestation. To make this point

clear, perhaps I may quote a few words from page 117 of this essay : "The life of God in the soul first works secretly in the processes of disillusionment and mortification, and in the shaping of higher ideals and aspirations ; then, when this work is in some measure completed, it may become manifest to the spiritual vision. . . . It is because of God's long-continued presence and operations within us, that at last our eyes may be opened to see Him." Thus my earlier chapters are mainly concerned with that inner working of God in the soul, which is the essence of vital religion ; the later ones try to expound the unity and method of that Divine working, and the process by which we can come, in some measure, to feel it and think it as a fact of personal experience.

I do not contend that the mystic (whether theological or otherwise) is necessarily a better Christian than other men of vital religion ; but I do mean that he differs from them in trying to make explicit to himself, through thought or feeling, the nature of that Divine "life" which animates both himself and them. If we may illustrate the spiritual from the physical, we might perhaps compare vital religion to the healthy and vigorous activity of the body in its various departments ; mystical religion to that comprehensive "joy of living" which belongs to certain temperaments ; and mystical theology to a scientific investigation into the nature and origin of the life thus working in the former condition and felt in the latter.

PREFACE

MYSTICISM, as I understand it, is the Religion of Experience. Mystical theology unfolds the processes in which this religion consists, and the laws of its development. It has its place between dogmatic theology, which systematises Christian truths, and moral theology, which expounds Christian duties.

Mysticism, or experiential religion, accepts doctrinal truths and treats them as vital principles—principles, that is, by which men live, and which are verified by the life itself. It takes the raw material of fact, and fashions it into the finished product of character ; it is the process by which dogma comes to be stated naturally and appropriately in terms of duty ; and mystical theology is the science which explains how this is done.

It tells us that truths are made into vital principles when they are naturalised in us, being accepted unreservedly by the will and the affections as well as by the intellect, and being thereby transmuted into spiritual love and energy. It unfolds the comprehensive discipline by which the will and the affections are schooled and consecrated ; it helps us

to understand the coming and going of those gleams of illumination which are at once an encouragement and a reward for hearts that are becoming pure ; it explains the verification of the spiritual life as consisting in the assurance that there, and there only, we have got or are getting what we want, namely, the supreme rest and satisfaction of a soul that is at union with God ; and it tells us how this assurance can be made a secure and abiding certainty, a foretaste and earnest of the Beatific Vision. Mysticism, then, is a process ; mystical theology is the science which explains that process. It is important to remember the distinction, since some confusion has arisen from ignoring it. When we speak of a mystic, we sometimes mean a man whose religion is a matter of real spiritual experience, sometimes a man who investigates the growth and conditions of such experience. The confusion comes to light when the question is asked whether every sincere Christian ought to be a mystic. If mystic is used in the latter sense of the word, the answer is obviously in the negative. A man can be a good Christian without being a theologian at all, *a fortiori* without being a mystical theologian. In the former sense the answer is more doubtful. It is true that a man may hold the doctrines of the faith with intellectual conviction, may frequent the Sacraments with devotion, and be occupied with noble and strenuous endeavours without having any glimpse of the underlying unity of a

spiritual life, in which these departments meet in indissoluble connection. But, on the other hand, I think it is true that the highest Christian life is a life in which "by ghostly and bodily exercises reason is turned into light and will into love," a life "fulshaped and *oned* to the image of our Lord, from clearness of faith to clearness of understanding, from clearness of desire into that of blessed love;" and I think we may safely add that some considerable infusion of mysticism is needed to keep the Christian life clean and sweet and personal, free from hardness and hypocrisy and formalism.

Moreover, I should like to urge that our Anglican Church is perhaps the best possible sphere for the cultivation of this experiential religion. It is clear to my mind that mysticism flourishes best when two conditions are fulfilled. First, it requires a strong framework of institutional religion, including Creeds and Sacraments, to save it from evaporating into a nebulous sort of cosmic emotion. And, secondly, it needs space and freedom for its growth and expansion; it is apt to be oppressed by an over-elaboration of external observances, and by an exaggerated exercise of authority. The Anglo-Catholic Church, which (in its ideal, at any rate) is dignified without being theatrical, and definite without being despotic, ought therefore to be an admirable seed-plot for the growth of mystical religion. This fact, if honestly faced, may serve to cheer the hearts of those who feel that on the

whole the English Church gives very little outward expression to the poetry and beauty, the mystery, the splendour, and the solemnity of religion. Perhaps the fact that this is so may be a wholesome discipline, helping us to lift up our hearts to the Uncreated Beauty and Majesty of God Himself. Perhaps we require to advance, as penitents, in spiritual religion, before we can render to Him an acceptable offering of the outward glory of created things.

Such, at any rate, is the spirit in which this essay is written. It is based on a full acceptance of the Catholic Faith and Sacraments, and is a humble attempt to show how they may be assimilated by our whole nature, take possession of every faculty, and become "the master light of all our seeing." I make no claim to originality. The quotations and references will show the extent of my dependence on writers of past times. Amongst living authors, I am specially indebted to Professor Inge, whose books have done so much to arouse an interest in Christian mysticism, to Father Congreve, S.S.J.E., both for his writings and for advice and information on the literature of the subject, and to Canon Randolph, of Ely Theological College, who most kindly read the essay in manuscript.

Will those who gain any help from this little book pray that the author may be made less unworthy of the high theme with which he deals?

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CHAPTER I

DISILLUSIONMENT

SPIRITUAL life, as a covenanted gift, is appropriated by us in the Sacraments. But the Sacraments can give or strengthen or restore spiritual life just because there are certain spiritual capacities inherent in human nature. By the grace of the Sacraments dormant seeds are quickened to life, errant instincts are guided, vague aspirations are justified, dark surmisings are enlightened, and feeble efforts are strengthened; the "promise," given by a free act of God's mercy, is fulfilled through union with Christ and manifests itself in the Christian life of faith, hope, and charity. But the promise was given before the Sacraments were instituted; it was rooted in the act of creation, when God made man in His own image. The image of God in man survived the apostasy of man, though blurred and obscured by sin; it survived as a spiritual endowment, as the promise on God's part of an union to be restored, as an incitement to human effort after recovery. The temple which

God had built for a habitation for Himself had fallen into decay, but fragments were left, and the ground plan was intact ; and therefore the restoration through Christ's work was possible ; therefore the temple could be rebuilt to God's glory by the action of the Holy Ghost. Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfil ; not to create a new body, but to heal the diseases of the old one ; to undo the effects of the fall, and restore to its original brightness the image of God in man.

Thus the spiritual endowment of man, dating from the act of creation, continued to exist and existed everywhere, in men of every nation and tribe and country.

God had made men everywhere of one blood or life, and in that one life was the impress of the Maker's likeness. It existed in the old Gentile world ; it exists in the heathen tribes of Africa. If it did not, our work would be hopeless ; for we should have nothing to appeal to, no foundation on which to build.

Every man without distinction had God in some measure in his heart ; therefore Christ could be the light that lighteth every man, the light that could everywhere make its appeal to a spark smouldering in the darkness.

Sin had produced grievous, and to human capacity irreparable results. Spiritually man had forfeited his simple, direct communion with God ; he had lost that contact with God which had been a bond of union for his own nature, and had reduced himself to a chaos of warring elements, a discordant

dualism of mind and body. His affections had been corrupted and dissipated by being diverted from God to the creature ; as a further result, his will had been weakened and distracted by being directed to this multiplicity of transitory objects.

Further, and from the same cause, his reason was blinded ; its intuitive insight into God, who is the Truth, had ceased, and it had to grope after truths by the piecemeal processes of the discursive understanding. Men walked "in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their heart." ¹

Still, though man's nature had thus been disintegrated, corrupted, weakened, and darkened, yet its constituent elements remained in the shape of desire, will, and intellect, together with some vague conception of the spiritual unity into which they ought to be gathered up and reconciled.

Man had lost God, but knew that he had lost Him. He had turned to lesser goods, but all the time he recognised their inferiority and inability to satisfy him. His spiritual endowment survived in (a) the possession of a rational will and (b) a restless and remorseful dissatisfaction with anything which that rational will could attain to apart from God.

In this sense, then, the image of God remained in man—remained in spite of his sin ; remained as an absolutely necessary condition of his renewal in Christ. "If Christ was to raise a new life like

¹ Eph. iv. 17, 18.

His own in every man, then every man must have had originally, in the inmost spirit of his life, a seed of Christ, or Christ as a seed of heaven, lying there as in a state of insensibility or death, out of which it could not arise but by the mediatorial power of Christ, who, as a second Adam, was to regenerate that birth of His own life which was lost in all the natural sons of Adam the first. But unless there was this seed of Christ or spark of heaven hidden in the soul, not the least beginning of man's salvation, or of Christ's mediatorial office, could be made. For what could begin to deny self, if there was not something in man different from self? What could begin to have hope and faith and desire of a heavenly life, if there was not something of heaven hidden in his soul, and lying therein as in a state of inactivity and death, till raised by the mediation of Christ into its first perfection of life, and set again in its true dominion over flesh and blood?"¹

Now, this Divine endowment survives in man, not only as a guarantee of the possibility of restoration, but also as a principle of discontent and dissatisfaction with anything that comes short of God. Man, made in God's image, can only rest in God, and is irrevocably doomed to be disappointed with anything else.

"God, of Thy goodness, give me Thyself. . . . If I ask anything that is less, ever me wanteth—but only in Thee I have all."²

This law of disillusionment, as we may call it, is

¹ Wm. Law, "Spirit of Love," Second Part, p. 31.

² Julian of Norwich, "Rev. of Divine Love," p. 11.

of the very greatest importance to the spiritual life, and we must try to understand it rightly.

As a rule we accept it as a fact ; sum it up in the aphorism, "Man never is, but always to be blest," and then regard it as a deplorable incident of human destiny, which, if dwelt on too much, can only lead to a melancholy temperament and a pessimistic philosophy.

But in matter of fact the law of disillusionment with the world is the introduction to all spiritual life, and is a fact to be joyfully accepted, meditated upon, and made a matter of thanksgiving to Almighty God.

But first let us consider what are the grounds on which this disillusionment is based. Briefly, we may say that our nature, being what it is, can only consent to be satisfied under certain conditions. We necessarily make certain demands or postulates which any prospective satisfaction must fulfil, or else be condemned as inadequate. What are these demands? The first is permanence. Having a permanent nature, we cannot rest contented with what is essentially transitory. This postulate is enshrined in some of our Collects, *e.g.*, when we pray that we "may so pass through things temporal that we finally lose not the things eternal,"¹ or, "that among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found."² *The sundry and manifold changes of the world*—there we have the first reason why the world can never satisfy us ;

¹ 4th after Trinity.

² 4th after Easter.

it lacks permanence and stability. This was the complaint made in the dawn of Greek Philosophy by Heraclitus and his school : *πάντα χωρεῖ καὶ οὐδὲν μένει*—"All things pass and nothing abides." All things pass : the physical world—including our own bodies—pleasures, friendships, interests, institutions, traditions, energies, laws. There is nothing, however apparently substantial, which can resist the subtle solvent of change and decay. It is so in our own personal experience. One after another, the things of the world which we have pursued and prized pass away from us, and we see that if we set our affections on them we shall be left naked and destitute at last. We need not labour this point. The transitoriness of the world, and the unsatisfactoriness of the transient, have been the constant theme of poets and philosophers, as well as theologians. If we were transient with the world and its objects, there would be no difficulty to be raised, and indeed no possibility of raising difficulties or forming themes of life at all ; we should then be like leaves floating down a stream, part of the flux of things, unconscious of any contradiction to be solved. But because we have a permanent nature, able to look before and after, we are aware of a crucial difference between ourselves and the world of becoming, and refuse to be satisfied with it or anything that belongs to it. If there is nothing to be had except a world of that sort, we shall be driven to pessimism, more or less complete in proportion to the sincerity and depth of our reflection. If religion has something different to offer, then our

disillusionment with the world will be our introduction to the spiritual life.

The second postulate with which we confront the world is the demand for unity. Our nature is a complex unity compounded of rational and emotional elements. That which is to satisfy us must—(1) be one; and (2) it must be concrete, *i.e.*, a rich and comprehensive unity, capable of doing justice to the diversity of our nature; and (3) it must be an unifying principle, drawing these diverse interests together, bringing out their connectedness, and gathering them up into itself; accomplishing in this microcosm of man the same sort of “summing up” and “reconciliation” which St. Paul tells us is accomplished by Christ for the universe as a whole.¹

Now that which the world (including our own bodies) supplies us with is a multiplicity of heterogeneous impulses, devoid of any principle of order or cohesion.

Animal appetites, æsthetic perceptions, emotions of sympathy, in the elementary stage; with maturer developments in the shape of acquisitiveness, patriotism, family affection, cultivation of the mind, and religious aspirations, present a strange medley of desires, in which the unity of the self retires into a dim and distant background. The natural man may resolve to extend an impartial welcome to them all, gratifying each as it comes, surrendering himself to the dominion of each in turn without preference or distinction. But he soon finds that—(a) they are in conflict with each other, so that to attain

¹ Eph. i. 10; Col. i. 20.

one is to forego another ; (b) that distinctions of higher and lower emerge in spite of his earnest effort to avoid partiality ; (c) that nothing but disgust and weariness ensues from an attempt to sacrifice the unity of his nature to a mob of warring impulses.

Some selection must be made from amongst the competitive claimants ; for instance, he must decide whether the satisfaction of the body or the satisfaction of the mind is to be regarded as his good, since sin has destroyed the primal unity of the spirit and substituted for it the antagonism of soul and body. But however he may decide between these and other alternatives, his choice remains an arbitrary one—*determinatio est negatio* ; in selecting one competitive satisfaction, he has entirely disenfranchised a dozen more, and has proportionately narrowed his conception of the nature which was to be satisfied. If he chooses the life of mental culture, he thereby rules out many other sorts of life which have their own claims upon him, and does his best to reduce the complex unity of his nature to the single element of intellect. There is here no unification of the various aspects of his self in a satisfaction which shall comprehend and reconcile them all. All but one are sacrificed, and the satisfaction of the one which remains is an one-sided and fragmentary affair. The scientific impulse has won its way, but only by the atrophy of other desires, the amputation of other capacities, the mutilation of a nature which was intended to love and feel as well as think. If, then, we seek from the world something which shall satisfy our demand for

unity—for an unifying principle which shall gather up all the elements in our nature, dignifying the body without degrading the soul, placing before us a clear object to be subserved and advanced in every trivial word and unnoticed act—we shall seek in vain.

Our third postulate is that there must be completeness in the object which is adequately to satisfy man made in God's image. "God made man to be an image of his own eternity" or "of his own proper being" (R.V.).¹ Having thus an element of infinity in himself, he projects his own infinity into those ideals which he pursues. Nothing short of the eternal, coherent, self-explanatory, will satisfy him either in the sphere of truth or in that of goodness or in that of beauty. The image of God in him manifests itself as faith in an ideal of perfection to be pursued in science, philanthropy, and art; without such a faith, progress in any of these spheres would be impossible, and this faith is rooted in the infinity of man's nature. In the domain of science he insists that there must be law, order, and connection everywhere, in spite of apparently overwhelming evidence to the contrary; in the domains of philanthropy or social reform he hopes against hope in the perfectibility of human nature, in the complete triumph of goodness and unselfishness, in the possibilities of saintliness for the most hardened sinner. Again, perfection is the inspiration of every true artist.

"All partial beauty is a pledge
Of beauty in its plenitude." *

* Wisdom, ii. 23. * Browning, "Easter Day," 24, cf. 26.

The ideal beauty is what he pursues, what helps him in his efforts, and makes him turn away ashamed from every result which he has attained. It will be admitted that in all these cases it is the ideal, the perfect, the eternal which are pursued. Also it must be admitted that they can never be attained. There is a cruel paradox in the contrast between the infinite ideals a man sets before himself, and the short span of human life which utterly prohibits their realisation. He hardly has time to start in the serious pursuit of his object—an object on which the whole strength of his faculties is set—when some paltry ailment strikes him down, and nothing worth speaking of (to his mind, at any rate) has been accomplished.

He has, perhaps, collected his facts of science, or studied the laws of human nature, or mastered the technique of his art; the infinite capacities of his being are fixed on the contemplation of their infinite goal. The infinite within him has fired him with faith in an infinite satisfaction in the way of knowledge or achievement; but, as far as this world is concerned, such a faith is doomed to inevitable failure and disappointment. It is true that this very disillusionment may send him back to God, who inspired the faith and alone can satisfy it, and may so give substance and reality to his spiritual life; but the disillusionment itself is none the less complete on that account—in fact, the deeper the disillusionment is, the greater will be the service it may render to the spiritual life.

Disillusionment, then, is the starting-point of experiential religion ; it does more than anything else to give substance and sincerity to faith. The man who finds no satisfaction for his affections, or will, or intellect in the things of this world, turns with a hungry soul to God. To him, God is to be no mere artistic embellishment of a life whose serious interests are elsewhere ; not a conventional ground or justification for the restraints of morality ; not a recipient of traditional expressions of homage and respect ; not a polite synonym for all that is obscure, mysterious, and unknowable in his surroundings. On the contrary, God is to be to him the object on whom every power of his nature is bent, the sum and substance of truth, and beauty, and goodness, the food of his soul, the inspiration of his acts, the familiar friend and counsellor of his every-day life, the Master who has a right to dispose of him as He wills, and whose service is perfect freedom. This is natural and inevitable. That for which a man lives, and on which he spends himself, cannot be a thin abstraction or an unmeaning formula. He must seek to satisfy himself with something solid and substantial. If he thinks that he has got such a satisfaction in the world, then his religion may well be nothing more than an outer crust of conventional beliefs and observances, which means very little and must not be probed too far. But if all satisfaction in creatures is to him vanity and vexation of spirit, he will either turn to pessimism or will demand of his religion that which he has failed to find elsewhere, namely, a living and all-

satisfying object of his love and knowledge and devotion. Such a man will be fiercely in earnest about his religion. It will be the life of his life. His attitude towards it will surprise and shock many of his neighbours, to whom the things of faith are a traditional heirloom and a respectable convention. He believes in his heart what they profess with their lips.

It does not in the least follow that because religion is the supreme reality of his life, he will be stupid, or lazy, or uncultured, that he will be a bad friend, a bad man of business, or a bad citizen. On the contrary, he may very well be most active and efficient either as a banker, or a Member of Parliament, or a contractor. The only difference will be that he is not absorbed in his business; he sits loosely to it, he is not trying to satisfy his soul by success in it; he rather regards it as a framework of material conditions (neither good nor bad in themselves) within which he is to lead a life which is not material but spiritual—a life of which God is the origin and motive, the pleasure and the goal.

Moreover, this principle that disillusionment is the mother of spirituality may be illustrated from history. Inward and spiritual religion is found to have flourished most vigorously in dark and troublous times. It was in the third century, when the despotism of the Empire gave small scope or encouragement to an active career, that Plotinus formed his theory of mystical union with the One; it was in the desolation of the great interdict in the fourteenth

century that Tauler, Rusbrock, and Suso exercised themselves in the internal ways of the spirit; and in the midst of the horrors of civil war that Walter Hilton and Julian of Norwich recorded their experiences. But, of course, these generalisations must be made with caution. Bad times may assist disillusionment, but are not essential to it; still less do they necessarily lead beyond it to spiritual religion.

The fact is that outward conditions have only an indirect influence in the matter. Under certain conditions—such as adversity or, again, monasticism—the growth of experiential religion is in the whole more easy and natural. But the facilities may be neglected; and, on the other hand, difficulties may be overcome. The Spirit bloweth where He listeth. Now in peace and now in war, now amongst the laity or secular clergy, and now amongst the religious, He summons whom He will to the inner ways of the spiritual life. We may be content with insisting that disillusionment is a necessary condition of spiritual religion without dogmatising as to the spheres in which this condition will be most probably fulfilled. Let us begin, then, by welcoming disillusionment. Let us follow it steadily as it leads us through disgust and disappointment with one thing after another—disgust and disappointment with the transitory, the disconnected, and the imperfect to the threshold of the spiritual life.

This discontent is a Divine discontent; its function is to bring us to the one, unchanging, and eternal Christ.

CHAPTER II

DETACHMENT

AN important step, leading to the door of the spiritual life, has been taken when we have convinced ourselves, by reflection, that the world and the things of the world can never satisfy a being made in the likeness of God, and retaining a seed of Divine life within him.

But this disillusionment is mainly an intellectual process. It is a conclusion based on certain premises. Our nature demands certain qualities in that which is to satisfy it; the world is devoid of those qualities, therefore the world cannot satisfy our nature. But our attitude to the world has to be an attitude of our whole being, and not of the intellect alone. We are not merely to find fault with it, but to turn from it.

Disillusionment, which is an attitude of the intellect, must be supplemented by detachment, which is an attitude of the will. And this contribution of the will must be added to that of the intellect, if the conviction of the unsatisfactoriness of the world is to prove a real avenue to the spiritual life; otherwise the conviction of the unsatisfactoriness of

our surroundings will not take us further than a querulous disposition and a philosophy of despair.

Disillusionment and detachment together make up the turning of our whole being from the world, as from that which cannot satisfy.

Together they make up what may be called the negative, or protestant, element of religion, from which we can then proceed to the positive and constructive factor; turning with our whole nature from the world, we turn whole-heartedly to God; the heart which the world leaves empty and unsatisfied is filled with all the fulness of God.¹ And we can look forward to the further stage, when, having turned resolutely from the world to God, and having found in Him alone the fulfilment of the demands made by our affection and will and reason, we come back to the world and find in it traces of a glory and significance not its own.

Possessing God as the sum and substance of all reality, we are enabled to interpret the world in the light of God, to see it *sub specie æternitatis*, to discover in it reflections and shadows, hints and suggestions of Him who made it as well as ourselves; when we have attained to the liberty involved in the glory of our sonship to God, the creature also will be liberated from the bondage involved in corruption. But we must not be in a hurry. We must first renounce the world by disillusionment and detachment, and find God through prayer and meditation, before the world can become transfigured by gleams from above. We must win our

¹ Eph. iii. 19.

own liberation, and experience our own sonship, before we call the world to participate in our liberty. We must not want to come down from the Cross until the world has been crucified to us and we to the world. The eye which can truly behold the glory of the world is the eye of a nature which is dead to the world and hid with Christ in God.

The turning of the will from the world has two aspects, to the first of which the term *Detachment* may be affixed, whilst the second may be called *Mortification*. Both terms signify the renouncing of the world and all its pomps and vanity; or, in other words, the refusal of the human will to find adequate motives to action in any temporal things.

The difference is that mortification has a penitential significance which is not connoted by detachment. The world which is renounced in detachment is a world of interests, activities, affections which do not seem to be wrong in themselves, and only become wrong when allowed to engross the soul to the exclusion of God, the one and only adequate aim of the rational will. On the other hand, the world renounced in mortification is definitely a world of sin, an aggregate of evil habits, a world from which we must turn not only in reverence for God and a deliberate choice of Him in preference to lower goods, but also in repentance and remorse for having degraded ourselves and broken God's commandments.

Detachment, then, means in brief the emptying ourselves of lower goods in order to be filled by God. God is the complete and all-comprehending

good ; He cannot be added to other goods which exist apart from Him. He cannot be made a kind of decorative coping stone to a building set up to our own glory, not to His. If we are acting throughout in obedience to our own likings and preferences, we must not introduce God's name in order to gain a sanction for our proceedings. We may not choose what we want to do and then plead that it is God's will. God must be everything or nothing in this matter. If we would give ourselves to His work, He must have an absolute right to decide what work we are to do for Him ; it is for Him to set us our tasks ; to judge, revise, and, if it be His pleasure, disannul our notions and ideas. If it is objected, " I want to serve God and not myself, but I shall serve Him most efficiently if I consider my own temperament and capacities," we must answer—(a) that the case of Moses and of Jeremiah does not bear out this contention. God may well call us to a work which seems utterly opposed to that which we should, on such considerations, have selected for ourselves ; and (b) we can judge how much of self-love and how much of God there is in our work. Should we be ready at a moment's notice to relinquish it, if God should be pleased to send us elsewhere ? Do we keep an open mind for such indications of His pleasure, or do we assume that it must be God's will that we should do this work and no other because it suits us and interests us, and because we are doing it so successfully ? Again, are we ready to do God's work in uncongenial surroundings, or do we conclude at

once that, because the surroundings are uncongenial, we cannot be required to work there ?

If we answer such questions in one way it will appear that self-love is still dominant in us ; that the will is still swayed by interests and desires which the reason has recognised to be inadequate and unsatisfactory. If we can answer in the other way, it will seem that at any rate we are honestly trying to make God, and God alone, the guide and master of our lives. It is often very difficult to tell what is the vocation with which God is calling us, but we shall at least have made a start when we recognise that there is no such thing as a "choice of a calling" ; either God calls or we choose, either we listen for God's voice or select the line of life which seems best to us.

Detachment, then, implies that we are on active service under the absolute command of God, that we are ready to go anywhere and do anything at His word ; that we sit loose to every interest and occupation, however absorbing it may temporarily be ; that we do our present work as efficiently as possible for God's sake, and are ready to surrender it to others and engage in something different at the first sign that God wills it so. It may seem a paradox to say that we only do our work really well when we are in a sense beyond and above it, and ready to relinquish it at an hour's notice—but that is true. If we get to identify ourselves with it and make it the object of our life, it becomes *our* work and *not* God's ; the motives with which we act will be corrupted, and the corruption will affect the very

results which we are so anxious to achieve. We shall be aiming in subtle ways at credit and recognition for ourselves, and shall probably refuse to stand aside when we are no longer efficient workers.

If, on the other hand, we regard our work as an item of service to which we are specially commissioned by God, and which may well be followed by other orders, we shall be able to act from the right motive ; God, not the work itself, will be of supreme importance.

The persons amongst whom this work lies may or may not interest us, but we shall be content to know that we are doing God's service, where He wills and for as long as He wills, and amongst those persons whom He wills to commend to our care.

And detachment will be a spiritual safeguard to us, whatever our work may be. It will save us from pride and vainglory if the work is congenial and of a sort which yields showy results ; and it will equally save us from depression and despair if the sphere of our labours is small and dull, and if nothing much ever seems to come of it. In this latter case we shall remember the angel, who "did God's will, to him all one, if on the earth or in the sun." We shall know that the measure of our success is the degree of our devotion to God, and the loyalty with which we serve Him, not results which can be stated in reports or balance-sheets.

If in a small sphere we can give more attention to our meditations, can purify the motive of our

work, and can give more care to influence on individual souls, we shall have much to thank Him for. Not the work in and for itself, but the work done as God's appointment, in God's way, and for God's glory, is to be our interest.

And so we come back to our principle that our interests are not to be chosen independently of God, and then to be supplemented by God, who gives them a formal and ceremonial sanction. Rather God comes first and last, and our interests and labours are to flow entirely from His sovereign will and pleasure.

This is one aspect of detachment.*

Secondly, if it is true that our interests and labours must not exist in any sense independently of God, the same is true of our possessions. If we are to possess God, we must possess nothing apart from God, nothing *of our own*. In God we may possess all the glory and truth and beauty of the

* "Thou shalt not do what thou wouldest, but let God do in thee what He wills. . . . This is the true freedom of the spirit, not to bind thyself to anything whatsoever. If thou wilt give thy soul to God thus loose, free, and alone, thou shalt see the wonders He will work in her. O admirable solitude, secret chamber of the Most High, where only He will give audience, and not elsewhere, and there speak to the heart of the soul ! O desert, changed into Paradise, since in it only does God vouchsafe to be seen and spoken with" ("Spiritual Combat," p. 214).

So Tauler : "Children, turn it which way ye will, the heart of man must be bare, empty, free, poor, and undisturbed, if God is really to work therein. It must be quite empty, and then God may and will dwell therein" ("Inner Way," sermon xxv.).

universe ; apart from Him they are nothing, and must count for nothing.

Anything that we think we possess, or count ourselves to have apprehended independently, is simply an obstacle which prevents us from receiving God in the plenitude of His perfection. He cannot supplement our worldly goods or æsthetics or culture any more than He can supplement our interests and motives. As Tauler says, "He who desired to have all the world with God would have nothing more than if he had God alone." And, on the other hand, an essentially worldly life is not redeemed from worldliness by subscriptions to charities or churches.

God will not be regarded as a cheap salve for uneasy consciences ; rather He wants the conscience to be uneasy, the spirit to be troubled, and will accept nothing but the broken and contrite heart. So, if worldly possessions keep us from the possession of God, we must detach ourselves in some very real sense from them. The great saints have felt that if they were to possess God, and everything in God, not only could they afford to dispense with every kind of private property, but also that poverty and destitution in these matters was an invaluable help. They had nothing, and yet possessed all things ; or, rather, they had nothing to keep them back from God, and therefore possessed all things in the possession of God Himself. Going bareheaded and barefooted through the world, with no worldly cares or anxieties, with no houses or families or riches to

distract them, they found that "all things were theirs" because they were Christ's, and in Christ existed all the wisdom and power of God.¹ They emptied themselves in order to be filled by God. They not only were convinced in their minds that the world could never satisfy them; they also turned resolutely from it, lest its deceits should hinder them from attaining their true rest and fulfilment in God. Having nothing of their own, they received the freedom of the universe, became shareholders in the boundless riches of God, cemented a friendship with all His creatures, "had joy in the sweet light which takes its joy of the sun," and experienced a happiness greater than any other people have ever felt, because their heart was lifted up in love to God the Giver of all, and overflowed in love to everything and everybody around them. Unshackled by narrow aims and ambitions, they had leisure to live and to love. Being in personal communication with the source and sum of truth, they were content with tem-

¹ We may compare here Plato's magnificent conception of Love as the desire for "what we have not, and are not, and need to have or be," and his assertion that "Love is always poor; not tender and beautiful (as most people think), but lean and gaunt; he is shoeless and homeless; he lies on the bare earth without a bed, and sleeps in the open air on door-steps or in the street, dwelling ever with want." Again, Love is a yearning for "the eternal possession of the good." We gain it by "begetting it in the sphere of beauty" (*i.e.*, it is the permanent expression of our own ideals); through communion with Absolute Beauty we beget the perfect good, which is true virtue and God's love and immortality (*Symposium*, 200. *e*; 203, *d*; 206, *a*; 212, *a*).

porary ignorance of many items of information which would one day be revealed when they should see all things in the perfected vision of God. And some measure of their serene happiness may be possessed by any one who is in earnest about the spiritual life, even if he be not as completely free as they are from the encumbrances of the world.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Poverty of spirit, aloofness, detachment, may take the place of downright destitution, just as recollectedness and concentration of mind take the place of downright solitude. The will may be free from the world and fixed on God, though much of our time is spent in worldly environment.

And, thirdly, detachment is not only required in the matter of work and of possessions, but also in this matter of moral goodness. In fact, it is especially true that in the case of moral goodness we must detach ourselves from our fancied possessions and achievements, if we are to receive God.

The righteousness which comes from union with God is different in kind from that which is acquired apart from God. The former cannot be used to supply deficiencies in the latter; cannot be added as a new patch on an old garment. The righteousness which is of the law and the righteousness which is of faith are alternative systems, different both in their sanctions and their motives. Legal righteousness (whether the law be that of the Old Testament Covenant or of public opinion) is a

business transaction, by which certain claims are established on the ground of the fulfilment of definite obligations. Two principles are involved in this : First, it is assumed that the man is able to fulfil the obligations ; that his will is free enough and strong enough to do all that is required. And, secondly, if he can thus perform this side of the compact, he deserves remuneration, can claim it as a right, and has ground for "boasting" of this achievement. John Smith states these principles when he remarks "that the grand opinion of the Jews concerning the way to life and happiness was this : That the law of God externally dispensed, and only furnished out to them in tables of stone and a parchment roll, conjoined with the power of their own free will, was sufficient both to procure their acceptance with God and to acquire merit enough to carry them with spread sails into the harbour of eternal rest and blessedness."¹ But the righteousness which is of faith flows entirely from the free mercies of God, is based on His promise, and effected by His grace. It is wrought by the power of God's presence within us. God's grace bears up the weakness of man's will, and so excludes all claim to boasting. Just as we have seen that our work is that which God commissions us to do from time to time by His power and to His glory, just as our possessions are the wisdom and beauty which God brings with Himself to our soul, so our goodness is God's love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost ; or, more exactly,

¹ "Select Discourses," p. 322.

it is our reception of God's love and our response to it. Any sort of virtue which has been gained independently of God's presence and of the power of His love in our hearts must be disregarded. It has probably, indeed, been the result of struggle and conflict, and so has a value in equipping the will with steadfastness and the power of concentration, helping it to persevere when turned to God.

In this sense the law will have been a school-master to bring us to Christ. But in itself it is a poor, cold, self-centred, and imperfect thing, which must be itself transcended, from which we must stand aloof and detach ourselves, if we are to come to God who is the fount of goodness just because He is Love. Two principles are important here. First, we must not come to God in order that our morality may be touched with emotion; in order that a more delicate perfume may be super-added to it, without its being in any way transformed. And, secondly, we must not come to God with the offer of a part of our nature, asking from Him strength to resist one particular temptation, as though we were sufficient of ourselves for the rest of our character. God, if He is to be anything, must be—(a) a *new* principle of conduct altogether, abolishing the sanctions and motives of social or self-regarding virtue; and (b) a *complete* principle, renewing the whole nature, penetrating everywhere, and not confined to the sphere of any one particular temptation or set of conditions. Christian virtue is the indwelling life of Christ as a transforming

principle, and one which embraces the whole nature. This transformation is described by Saint Paul, "That ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."¹ And from the putting on the new man he deduces a comprehensive list of virtues: truthfulness, honesty, purity, and kindness. Christian truthfulness, resulting from a sense of membership in the one body of redeemed humanity, is utterly different from heathen truthfulness, so far as there was such a thing: and Christian truthfulness logically implies and necessitates the presence of Christian honesty, Christian purity, and Christian kindness, with which it is associated in the character of the "new man" created after God.² Also, earlier in the same Epistle, he gives a glowing description of the indwelling life of Christ, the renovating principle of the entire man. "That He would grant you to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love may be able to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." And here too the fruits of that presence are similarly stated: that they should therefore walk worthily of their vocations, "with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love."³

Thus the presence of Christ in the heart of the Christian (recognised and responded to by love) is

¹ Eph. iv. 23.

² Eph. iii. 16 *seq.*

³ Eph. i. 2.

to be a renovating principle of perfect holiness and Christian goodness in every department of human nature and every sphere of conduct.

Nothing can be withdrawn or exempted from the new transforming influence. And in order that we may receive it, there must be entire detachment and aloofness from the old man and its works, including not only anti-Christian sin but also unchristian standards and conceptions of morality. All things that were gain to us, including a sense of respectability and the esteem of others, must be counted as loss in order that we may win Christ, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.¹

(d) Lastly, detachment is necessary as a corrective to men's ordinary conception of the universe in its relation to God. This conception assumes that nature is sufficient for itself in all ordinary affairs; that it has its own laws and modes of working, which are purely "natural," and with which God has no concern; that God may legitimately be recognised as the Maker who in a remote past set the machine in motion, and who may possibly "intervene" to modify its operations in some arbitrary manner and for some exceptional purpose, but who has nothing whatever to do with its working. Now this conception of Nature as a "self-running machine," and of God as an absentee² whose action in the sphere of Nature can only be conceived

¹ Phil. iii. 9.

² See "The Immanence of God," by Prof. Borden Bowne.

as "interference" with natural law, is essentially irreligious, and it is irreligious in the same way as the various conceptions of human life which we have been criticising. It attempts to bring in God to supplement something which has come to be regarded as existing independently of God; and this is just as utterly untenable a view when applied to Nature as it is when applied to personal life.

In the sphere of natural philosophy it assigns a merely ceremonial and complimentary function to the Almighty. He is assumed as an Hypothesis to account for the origin of the universe; but any practical interest which He might evince in its working would be a "miracle," something, that is, not inherently impossible, but to be jealously scrutinised as most improbable and not altogether seemly. Now, if Nature is presented to us in that light, we must detach ourselves from it, and get back to God the Creator. We shall insist that if God made the world, it is His for ever; that if He fashioned it in the beginning, He thereby endowed it with all its capacities of subsequent development and modes of operation; that, in a word, it works in accordance with His will and in fulfilment of His purposes. Just as we learn in our personal life that not only did God make us, but that His Spirit is always with us, striving and working in our conflict with evil and aspirations after holiness, so here we shall be able to return from God to Nature, recognise God's presence and sovereignty in the universe which He made, and see in all the laws of Nature an orderly exercise of God's power. A miracle will

not be the intrusion of an alien factor from outside, interfering with and upsetting Nature's laws ; it will simply be a reminder that the Power which works in Nature is always and everywhere a moral and spiritual Power, and that what we call miracles are its orderly mode of achieving some great moral and spiritual object.

Let us sum up, then, the contention of this chapter.

If God in the plenitude of His power and glory and goodness is to be received by us, our soul must, in the first instance, be emptied of all desires for partial and imperfect goods. We must recognise that we are nothing, have nothing, and avail nothing, apart from God ; further, that the claim to be something, have something, or desire something of ourselves, is precisely that which banishes us from God. "What did the devil do else, or what was his going astray and his fall else, but that he claimed for himself to be also somewhat, and would have it that somewhat was his, and somewhat was due to him ? This setting up of a claim, and his I and Me and Mine—these were his going astray, and his fall. And thus it is to this day." *

So, too, Tauler writes : " Know this, that if thou seekest something that is thine own, thou seekest not God only, and thou wilt never find Him. . . . Of ourselves we have nothing, for this and all other gifts are from above. Therefore he who would receive from above, must of necessity place himself beneath,

* "Theologia Germanica," p. 6.

in true humility. And know of a truth that, if he leave anything out, so that all is not beneath, he will have nothing and receive nothing. Dost thou trust to thyself, or to anything else, or anybody else? Thou art not beneath, and wilt receive nothing; but if thou hast placed thyself beneath, then thou wilt receive all things fully. When a soul is freed from space and time, the Father sends His Son into that soul to be born there.”¹

Thus we must banish all minor goods from consideration, and relegate them to the nothingness which is theirs apart from God, in order that we attend without distraction to God Himself.

Afterwards, in God's good time, we may return to them, transfigured ourselves by being made partakers of the Divine Nature, and finding them also transfigured, and become fit to be made an offering on the altar of our love to God. We shall recognise in them echoes, however faint and distant, of the Divine voice which has been speaking directly to our hearts. But our first duty is to come out and be separate, otherwise our motives will be alloyed, our allegiance divided, our devotion incomplete. We shall be like a bird fettered to earth by a string, and unable to soar to heaven. Now this separation is often described as a “dark night,” through which the soul must pass on its way to God. And the expression is apt. The five senses are like windows, through which the sights and sounds, the desires and allurements of the world make themselves felt by the soul. Detachment is

¹ “The Inner Way,” pp. 46, 47.

the act of, as far as may be, closing and curtaining these windows, whereby the soul makes herself blind, deaf, asleep to the world, that she may be wakeful and attentive to the things of God. This darkness, self-imposed and resolutely endured, must precede the dawn of the spiritual day.

In this connection we are irresistibly reminded of Plato's great allegory of the Cave,¹ in which he illustrates the difference between opinion and knowledge, between the vision of shadows and the vision of truth. For, in the first place, Plato, like the Christian writers who came after, insists on the unsatisfactoriness and unreality of worldly experience ; what his prisoners in the cave see is the flickering shadows, thrown by a fire burning behind them, upon the recesses of the cave. And (2) their deliverance consists in their being unfettered and led out of their shadow-world to the vision of the sun and the sunlit universe—the sun signifying the source of truth and existence.

The difference here between Plato and the Christian mystic, is that between the vision of shadows and the vision of the real world the latter interpolates *Darkness* as an intermediate stage. Why is this necessary ? And why is it not found in Plato ? The answer is (a) that this stage is faintly suggested by Plato when he tells us that the eyes of the released prisoners are dazzled and darkened by the sunlight when they are first brought into it. The truth in its purity cannot be grasped at once ; it appears strange and unreal in comparison with the

¹ " Republic," bk. 7.

old familiar shadows of the cave, to which they yearned to go back. And, on the other hand, Plato naturally does not go beyond that bare suggestion, because the allegory refers mainly to intellectual knowledge, and because he held the theory that virtue is one form of intellectual knowledge. On that theory the mind has only to be shown its mistakes in order to correct them, and pass at once from error to knowledge, subject only to a temporary bewilderment of the mental vision. But centuries of experience have taught the Christian consciousness that the will has a larger share than the intellect in the attainment of moral truth.

The purgation of the will is a prior condition of the illumination of the understanding. And the "Dark Night" is the purgation of the will; its retirement upon itself in shame and confusion; its hatred of itself for having loved the shadow-world; its extinction of false lights as a preparation for due reception of the true; its acquiescence in darkness as a state of discipline and penance; its sense of unworthiness to gaze upon the King in His beauty; in a word, its self-humiliation as a necessary moral condition of rising to the vision of spiritual Truth.

CHAPTER III

MORTIFICATION

MORTIFICATION would naturally seem to differ from detachment in being narrower in its range and more vigorous in its action. Detachment is the process by which we learn to sit loosely to the whole sphere of worldly interests. Mortification is the act of slaying sinful interests. And this distinction is superficially true. But it would probably be truer to say (*a*) that mortification is a further development of detachment, forcing its claims upon us as we grow in spiritual insight ; and (*b*) that it is specially concerned with those interests from which detachment is specially necessary for each several person. Detachment, as we have seen, means that we hold aloof from the whole sphere of creaturely things, in order to attend better to the will of the Creator. And, as we have also seen, this detachment is necessary because, if we do not hold aloof from them, they put us into a false attitude to God, making us fancy that we can receive Him, not as our All in All, but as a supplement to something which is not God. It is the nature of worldly desires to distract us

from the single-hearted love of God. But we find on deeper reflection that they do more than that. We find that, as S. John of the Cross¹ tells us, they weary, torment, darken, defile, and weaken the soul in which they grow. They weary it with their persistent importunity ;² torment it with the stings of insatiable lust ; darken and defile what ought to be a clear mirror reflecting God ; and weaken a will which, disintegrated and divided by their obsession, is unable to concentrate itself on God.

Worldly desires—that is, desires for something apart from God—thus appear on further reflection to be not merely a screen between the soul and God, but are an infection and malady of the soul itself. Hence, as we think of it, the need of detachment grows into a need of mortification ; and, of course, those desires are to be especially mortified which are most directly sinful, most defiling and weakening to the soul.

Mortification, then, is the act of hating, conquering, and killing the impulses and habits which keep us from God ; and of wrenching ourselves away from all circumstances which are for us occasions of sin.

Now, this mortification is potentially accomplished in us at our baptism, whereby we are dead and buried with Christ ; but it has to be

¹ "Mount Carmel," bk. i. chap. vi. *seq.*

² "They resemble little children, restless and dissatisfied, who, always begging of their mother now one thing, now another, are never content."

developed by us into a fact of moral experience.

The "death unto sin" and the "new birth unto righteousness," germinally communicated to us in the Sacrament, must be made effective by our acceptance of them through the co-operation of our will. It is well, for our purpose, to glance at S. Paul's statement of the relation between (a) the redemptive work of Christ for humanity, (b) its application to individuals in the Sacrament of Baptism, and (c) its conscious appropriation and acceptance by the will.

(i) In its simplest form it is the statement that *being dead in sin*, and in the powerlessness which sin produces, we are vivified with Christ in His resurrection by the free grace of God. "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." ¹

Here the Divine act of redemption stands out clearly by itself, the emphasis lying on the helplessness which sin produces, and the working of God's quickening grace.

(ii) But this grace is in the first instance a gift of *forgiveness*, as we see in the parallel passage in Colossians: "You, being dead in your sins, . . . hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all your trespasses." ²

¹ Eph. ii. 5, 6.

² Col. ii. 13.

And the gift is received through faith, and manifested in good works.¹ Hence a *response* from our side is involved, a co-operation with God who freely quickens us: and this co-operation is the renunciation of sin, the killing of sin in ourselves. Hence it becomes clear that sin is not merely a passive death of the soul, from which we are raised to life in Christ's resurrection: it is a *living death* of the soul,² and must be itself killed in the dying of Christ, if the soul is to be raised by His resurrection. We who were dead *in* sin must die *to* sin through union with the death of Christ, if we are to be raised by Him to newness of life. Here the emphasis rests on the death of Christ, and on human co-operation with His redemptive act; we are told that we must consciously and deliberately share Christ's Passion, if God's grace is to be effective for us. "Our old man is crucified with Him." "If we die with Christ we believe that we shall also live with Him." "Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh."³

(iii) We can thus die to sin through union with Christ's death, because the Christ who died was perfectly righteous and hated sin, and can therefore give the power of mortifying sin to those who are united to Him. "He was made sin for us, who

¹ Eph. ii. 8, 10.

² Cf. 1 Tim. v. 6, "She who liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth."

³ Rom. vi. 6, 8; 2 Cor. iv. 10.

knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." ¹

And we can unite ourselves to Christ in His sufferings and death, because it is there that He meets us, as the sin-bearer, on our own level.

Thus a fuller analysis shows Christ as our Guide at every step. It is His action which makes ours possible. Because in the humiliation of His death He condescends to our level, we (who were dead in sin) can unite ourselves to Him there. Because He abhors sin, we also can hate it and mortify it through the power of our union with Him. Because we are thus dead to sin, we can be raised by Him in His resurrection to righteousness of life.

(iv) Baptism gives to each of us individually the germ of this process of redemption. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." ²

(v) It remains that this position communicated to us by baptism should be developed and made good in personal experience. The sacramental gift is to be translated into moral victory.

Thus by sacramental union with Christ in His death, we are potentially dead to sin, and are able to make that death to sin a felt reality pervading our conscious self. Because we are dead to sin as a whole, we can and must die to each sinful desire and evil habit; the sacramental gift is to grow and

¹ 2 Cor. v. 21.

² Rom. vi. 3-5.

expand into a conquest in personal, moral experience ; and this is mortification.

So the upshot of S. Paul's teaching is that the personal, moral, mortified life stands in a definite relation both to Christ's work of Redemption and to the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, inasmuch as it *individualises* a work that was general in its scope, and *develops* a gift that is germinal at its inception.

Further, we must remember that through Baptism we are united to Christ in His Resurrection as well as in His Death ;¹ and that therefore the power of the risen life is in us as well as, and together with, the power of dying to sin. The Christ "who liveth and was dead" is in us through the Sacrament as "our life" and "the hope of glory."

The presence in us of that life and hope, however germinal at first, is to give us the power of persevering in mortification. We can slough off the old man and his works, not only by our share in Christ's death, but also by the vigour of His risen life which is throbbing through our veins.

Life through death is the motto for Mortification. Its purpose and outcome is life. Its very essence, that which distinguishes it from an asceticism which is senseless suicide, is the desire for life. We are to die through union with the death of Christ : but the Christ who died is also the risen Christ, the Christ who came that we might have life, and have it more abundantly.²

¹ Buried with Him in Baptism, wherein also we are risen with Him (Col. ii. 12).

² S. John x. 10.

Remembering this, we may proceed to consider the process of mortification, the killing of the evil principle of sin by union with the death of Christ.

But first of all, if we are to attack and kill the root of sinfulness, we must honestly repent of the sins which in time past have sprung from that root.

Repentance, then, is sorrow for having offended the love of God. This is a short account, but it contains two parts which we must be careful to understand. First, the *general* nature of repentance is sorrow. Secondly, that which occasions this sorrow is the fact—and nothing but the fact—of our having offended the love of God.

It is this latter part of the description which differentiates repentance from other states of mind with which it is apt to be confounded.

(a) There is, for instance, the suffering which sin brings in its train: its natural consequences, or social penalties. Sometimes this suffering is mistaken for repentance. We have sinned; we suffer; we are sorry—but then we are sorry not for having offended God, but for having to suffer the consequences of our act. Such was the sorrow of the impenitent thief. But the other thief shows us that suffering may become the occasion of repentance; if it is recognised as our deserts—or far less than our deserts—if it is whole-heartedly accepted and cheerfully endured. Then punishment is transformed into penance:¹ and penance is the outward manifestation of repentance. But punishment or suffering is, in itself, a mere natural fact, the outcome of

¹ Moberly, "Atonement and Personality," chap. i.

necessary law, without any moral significance. It involves sorrow for ourselves as subject to the suffering : but this is mere self-pity, and self-pity is a form of self-love.

(b) Or again, a man may be indignant with himself for having yielded to some degrading sin. He has thereby forfeited his self-respect, and is angry, surprised, and full of resentment against himself. He thought he was strong, felt confidence in his power of self-mastery, and now he is proved to be utterly weak. Now *if* this indignation with oneself is an indignation with oneself for ingratitude and folly in deserting God's loving guidance, it becomes part of true repentance. Otherwise, it is only a form of pride, an exhibition of wounded self-love, consisting in disappointment at the failure of our own fancied strength. And this is just the opposite spirit to that of real repentance, which rests on humility, and recognises that sin is nothing to be surprised at, but rather is the natural and inevitable result of trusting to self and letting go of God.

And being opposite in spirit to true repentance, it is also opposite to it in results. Repentance is a principle of hope, and a pledge of restoration through return to God. This lacerated pride is a principle of despair : the self on which it relied has failed, and there is no other strength within its view.

Repentance, then, is essentially different from sorrow at having to suffer and from self-contempt at having failed. Repentance is sorrow for having

offended the love of God ; and we must add that, where repentance exists, full forgiveness follows. Forgiveness does not let us off the punishment of our sin. On the contrary, it is only when that punishment, whether in physical suffering or social retribution or inward self-contempt, has been loyally and patiently accepted and turned into penitential sorrow, that forgiveness becomes possible. For repentance must go before forgiveness ; and the sorrow in which repentance consists must be real suffering, deeply felt and patiently endured. The acuteness of the suffering is the measure of our repentance ; and repentance is the guarantee of forgiveness.

The difficulty of obtaining God's pardon is the difficulty of repenting ; and it is difficult for us to repent, because we cannot feel suffering adequate to our ingratitude and selfishness.

We shall understand this better if we think of the Passion of Christ as the School of Repentance. Contemplation of His sufferings, combined with prayer, will do more than any other exercise to cause genuine sorrow for having offended the love of God. The following suggestion may be useful with this intention. Let us, in following the scenes of the Passion, contemplate our Lord as the sin-bearer, and think of each insult or indignity suffered by Him as representing to us the penalties due to our own offences.

Is He left alone in the Garden, forsaken by His friends ? That is what we deserve for our sins ; to be cast off and rejected by all men. Is He arrayed

derisively in the insignia of royalty? Any dignity or position on which we pride ourselves is a sham and a mockery as bestowed on sinners like us.

Is He scourged at the pillar? The chastisement due to us is laid upon Him. Is He scorned, insulted, spat upon? That is exactly how we deserve to be treated for our conduct.

Did He stand silent before His judges? We have no answer or excuse to make for our sins. Was Barabbas preferred to Him? The worst criminal has sinned less deeply than we, because he has had less grace and light.

Was He stripped of His garments? Every shred of self-complacency and self-esteem should be torn from us. Was He mocked in His dying agony? Our sufferings are due to sin and deserve no commiseration. Did He die on the Cross? Sin is the suicidal ruin and destruction of our nature.

And then let us reflect that it was He who knew no sin that was thus made sin for us. In His Passion He is freely putting Himself on the level of us sinners, feeling the inner defilement of our sin in Gethsemane, and enduring its outward penalties in the judgment-hall and on the Cross. In acting thus, He does two things: (*a*) As our Representative He is making a great act of reparation to Almighty God for human sin; making that full and adequate act of sorrow for sin which had to be made if forgiveness was to be received, and which sin-hardened, callous man could never make.¹ And (*b*) by the very fulness and completeness of this act of sorrow

¹ "Atonement and Personality," chap. ii.

He is teaching us the greatness of God's love and the hatefulness of our sin. Thus we come to feel the stirrings of real sorrow for having rejected God's love. Moved by that sorrow, we take our place beside Him in His Passion, enduring our small sufferings cheerfully, uniting our half-hearted penitence with His Divine, all-comprehensive sorrow, whereby it can be deepened and strengthened and purified. If we thus feel sorrow for having offended the God who loves us, if this sorrow gladly accepts suffering as a penance freely endured, if it makes us humble and self-distrustful, and is offered to God in union with the atoning sorrows of our Redeemer, then it is of the essence of true repentance.

Repentance, then, is true to what we have recognised as the characteristics of Mortification as a whole. In Repentance, the Sacramental gift of "the death unto sin" is developed into a fact of experience by the sincerity of our union with Christ in His sinlessness and His sufferings.

CHAPTER IV

MORTIFICATION (*continued*)

REPENTANCE is sorrow for having offended the love of God by our past sins. Mortification attacks sin itself—that is, the evil principle out of which all acts proceed. And it does this by starving it, by cutting off its supplies, and refusing it the food on which it fattens.

These supplies of food are twofold—internal and external. Internally, they are the wrong thoughts, desires, and imaginations which minister to the wanton nature of sin ; externally, they consist in a wrong environment, in companionships, books, amusements, occupations which suggest such thoughts and desires, and which are therefore occasions of sin to the soul.

When both directly and indirectly all food supplies are cut off from the carnal nature, it grows weak and feeble ; where no fuel is provided, the flame dies down. But great thoroughness is needed, and in two directions : first, in making the *area* of prohibitions sufficiently wide ; and secondly, in admitting of no exceptions to the *law* of prohibition. For, in the first place, evil comes

upon us in the most subtle and manifold disguises. Thoughts which are (or seem) innocent in themselves lead, by channels of association cut deep in our own consciousness, to that which is sinful. Therefore they must be banished as dangerous to us, though perhaps not dangerous to others whose character and experience are different. And the same is true of occupations, companionships, amusements. Here there is a great danger of self-deception. "What harm can there be in these things? Many people do them, and are none the worse." Possibly; but it is of your own soul that you must think.

If, in your case, these seemingly innocent byways of imagination or diversion lead, after sundry wanderings, into the broad path of sin, to you they are forbidden ground. The sequence by which wrong desires have in your past experience followed certain thoughts or surroundings remains an intersecting channel in the substance of the brain; so that, when a similar imagination occurs, a similar desire is excited by a law of association grounded in your personal life. It is therefore sheer hypocrisy and self-deception to argue that such things are harmless, when you know by bitter experience that they are not so to you.

We must be honest with ourselves; if we really want to get rid of sin, we must spread the net wide enough to include everything which is an occasion of sin to us. As Avancini suggests, we may imitate in a good purpose the evil machinations of King Herod. As he, in his attempt to slay the child

Christ, ordered a massacre of all the babes in Bethlehem, so we, in order to slay sin, must slaughter everything which has any kinship or proximity to sin. And, secondly, no exception must be allowed to the rule of starving out the sinful nature. What we must do is to establish a habit of resistance—and a habit grows out of a continuity of similar actions. If each temptation as it comes is resisted, a habit of resistance is formed, by which the will is strongly reinforced. And if *no* exception is permitted, the habit may at last become so strong that the resistance to temptation is almost spontaneous or automatic, which means that the sin is virtually conquered. But our miserable weakness nowhere shows itself more conspicuously than in the irresolution which falters and hesitates in the formation of this habit. The sin (in thought or word or action) is allowed in an unguarded moment, the habit of resistance which was being built up as a fortress in the soul is shaken or broken ; the enemy must be met now in a hand-to-hand conflict every hour of the day, and the reconstruction of the wall painfully undertaken afresh.

And, now, *what* more precisely is the sin which must be mortified—the sin to which we are to die with Christ ? and what is the counter-virtue which is to be cultivated—the virtue in which we are to rise with Christ ? The two questions go inseparably together, and are practically interchangeable. We can only attain this virtue by killing the sin ; and we can only in the long run kill the sin by striving

positively and constructively after the opposite virtue. What, then, is sin? What is the quality which, by its presence in all sins, makes them sinful? We answer briefly that self-will is the very life of the natural man; that self-assertion is self-will in action; and that self-assertion, morally considered, is the sin of pride. Pride is not so much one of the deadly sins, as the common characteristic of every sin; it is *the* sin which must be mortified. Sometimes it appears as the self-assertion of the animal propensities in lust or gluttony or sloth. This is the pride of the flesh. The body is allowed to assert itself independently of the soul, and in defiance of it. Sometimes it takes the form of social self-assertion in avarice, anger, or envy. This is the pride of life. It is marked by a desire for pre-eminence, and by impatience of resistance or restrictions.

But in every case sin is the assertion of the narrow self in defiance of relationships to God and man. Moreover, since a man's personality is determined by these relationships, it follows that sin is not a mere transgression of some law arbitrarily imposed from without, but is a violation of the law of personality itself. It is not good for man to be alone. He is intended to live in conscious fellowship with other men. Sin, then, as the assertion of the narrow, particular self in rebellion against God and in contempt for man, is a violation of that ideal intention.

And here we have the answer to an objection often made, that Christian morality is a weak and invertebrate thing; that self-assertion, here com-

prehensively identified with sin, is the source of all vigorous action and of all success in life. We answer (a) that self-assertion may be the success of a man as a particular independent organism, but it is his failure as a member of a society, in and by which he is to be moulded and limited. Self-assertion may breed millionaires, but cannot produce a hero or a patriot, to say nothing of a saint. If a man is to be any of these, it will be just because there is operative in him some principle different from, and hostile to, the assertion of himself.

And (b) Christian morality is not, in matter of fact, a feeble or ineffective thing. On the contrary, it is the full, strong development of personal life, which consists in relationships, and which is gradually perfected by the widening of the area and the purifying of the Spirit in which such relationships are manifested. Christian personality is the "new manhood," for which walls of partition are broken down and enmities abolished, whilst the law of love becomes its active and elevating force, the strongest and purest force which the world has ever known. Christian morality, in which this Christian personality becomes explicit, is none the less effective and energetic because the good which it pursues is the good of all.

But, it may be replied, is it possible for a man to be really actuated by such motives? Is it not psychologically true that he always acts from desire? And is not such action necessarily a form of self-assertion? Is not the attempt to crush self-assertion an attempt to cut off the springs of action altogether

and paralyse the human will ? We answer, It is undeniably true that a man always acts from desire, and also that, where various desires compete, he always acts from the strongest desire. But it does not follow that this desire should necessarily be directed to the attainment of his private interests and aims. Whether he can desire the attainment of other aims is a matter of experience, to be empirically decided, not prejudged by *a priori* philosophisings.

But once more it may be rejoined : To act from desire means, in the case of man, to act with a view to a certain realisation of his nature ; but self-realisation is the same as self-assertion ; hence self-assertion is equally the motive of both saint and sinner, whatever differences there may be in other respects between their actions. Such a contention, however, merely points out that in all human action there is not only desire, but a self which desires ; and this is obviously true. But the question is, What does this self desire ? Of course it often, perhaps generally, desires its own private interest in some form or other ; and such desire I describe, for lack of a better word, as self-assertive. But if experience indicates that the self can disregard its private interests, and desire something quite different, this means, not that the self has disappeared and been killed out, but merely that it has got beyond what is private and particular, and has identified its good with the good of a whole, to which it is prepared to sacrifice its separate interests, and indeed, if need be, its separate existence.

It will, therefore, make things clear if we definitely state what has been implied throughout, namely, that by self-assertion we mean desires or actions directed to the agent's private or separate interests ; and that by the mortification of self-assertion is meant the sacrifice of such interests in the cause of a higher and larger whole.

When S. Paul, for instance, could wish himself accursed for the sake of his brethren, he was ready to sacrifice his private good in the next world as well as this for the sake of the Jewish people to whom he belonged, and whose good he passionately desired. Such a wish may be uncommon, but that is no reason why philosophy should rule it out as inherently impossible. To argue that, because the actions of S. Paul and those of his contemporary, the Emperor Nero, equally implied "desire" and a "self" which desired, therefore their actions equally proceeded from self-assertion, is merely to play with words in an unnecessarily pedantic manner. Whether self-assertion, in the sense in which we have defined it, is mortified or not depends on character and must be decided by experience. If experience decides that it is so mortified, whether in few cases or many, philosophy must accept the ruling and shape its own phraseology accordingly.

The history of the great Saints is a proof that this difficult thing is practicable. How difficult it is, we do not require either the Saints or philosophy to tell us ; we know that by our own experience.

Self-assertion, the insistence and pressure of private interest, seems to confront us at every turn,

and to be not least active in our best endeavours. It attacks us first and most forcibly as the pride of the flesh ; and when this has been temporarily subdued by a rigorous control of bodily desires, it reappears in a social or intellectual form as the desire for success, recognition, or power. And when we have entrenched ourselves against this attack in the outworks of religion, it follows us thither as a craving for personal influence, a desire for work which interests and attracts us, a pugnacious wish to make our own views and methods oust those of other people, an effort (real if unavowed) to bring souls to us instead of bringing them to Christ ; tending in one or more of these ways to turn the pastor of Christ's sheep into a hireling or a thief. And, further, when we are winning our way to more spiritual paths of inward religion, it is with us still, leading us to look to the felt sweetness of God's presence rather than the resolute doing of God's will.

CHAPTER V

THE MORTIFICATION OF PRIDE

WE have seen that Mortification consists in starving out the sinful principle, by denying it the food supplies which either directly or indirectly nourish it, and by admitting no exception to the law of denial. And we have further identified sin with pride or self-assertion, and have discovered how manifold are the modes in which it presents itself to us. Let us return, then, to our general method of mortification, and consider more definitely how *Pride* can be effectually starved out, in whatever particular direction it may tempt us.

(1) It is very important to have a definite rule of daily life, including such things as food and drink, business, recreation, study, and social intercourse. Idleness is the purveyor of most of its supplies to pride. For it is in idleness that bad thoughts, gossip, discontent, vainglory, and moroseness are imported into the soul, and such imports form the regular dietary of Pride. A rule of life banishes idleness: it braces and fortifies the soul by the discipline of regular hours; it disallows the do-as-you-like, go-as-you-please pro-

cedure of self-will ; it renders every section of the day true to its appointed character ; the work becomes real, tough, hard work in the way of reading, business, prayer, meditation ; and the recreation is downright, honest amusement, than which there is nothing more wholesome for the human soul. In neither case is there any room for that capricious, wayward, discursive laziness in which self-love runs riot.

(2) Secondly, we must put forcible restraint on the unfavourable judgments which we are tempted to pass on other people. This sort of criticism is one of the most common manifestations of Pride, proceeding either from envy or conceit. We must begin by compelling ourselves to *say* kind things about our neighbour, even though our hearts are charged with malice or uncharitableness. To kind words we shall add small acts of kindness in whatever way they are possible. Then we shall be able to attain to kind thoughts, to the charity which "thinketh no evil" just because "she seeketh not her own" ; and this charity is the very antithesis of Pride. Where by steady and forcible self-restraint we have attained to such an attitude of love and charity to our neighbours, we shall have inflicted a deadly wound on our great arch-enemy.

(3) We must cultivate the practice of Patience, by which I mean the quiet endurance of the crosses, troubles, sorrows, and vexations which thwart or sadden our life. By accepting these with a good grace we shall be doing much to subdue the arro-

gant self-assertion which regards every cross or trial as an insult to our dignity or an obstacle to our success. By patiently suffering such things as misrepresentation or the miscarriage of favourite schemes, we are acting the prayer, "Not my will, but Thine be done"; we are schooling ourselves to look away from private interest and personal gratification, and to place ourselves in God's hands to be used by His mightier power and purer love. This Patience is a potent weapon against Pride; but it must work in a simple and natural manner. It is wisest, as Father Baker reminds us, to be content to endure the crosses which meet us in the ordinary way, and which are quite sufficient for our purpose. If we run after self-chosen and self-inflicted sufferings, we are terribly apt to be ensnared by a subtle form of that very Pride against which we are contending.¹ But the Patience which is quiet, steadfast, and unostentatious, which serenely meets each trouble as it comes, accepting each as a reminder that God's strength is made perfect in weakness, and that weakness is our natural and appropriate condition—such Patience is a very shrewd attack on the power of Pride.

(4) We must contemplate the humility of Christ, who pleased not Himself but worked only at doing the Father's Will and the salvation of human souls. So we must dedicate ourselves every day to the doing of our Saviour's will, not to the pursuit of popularity or success. We must confess our un-

¹ "Holy Wisdom," p. 222.

worthiness to act or speak at all in His name ; and must remember that the grace which commissions and supports us in our work is the same grace which first pardoned our own offences. Our work must be done in deep abasement, since it is the work of penitents, and an outward expression of repentance.

(5) We must persevere in our prayers and spiritual exercises, even when they bring no comfort or consolation to our souls. We must recognise these times of darkness as, first, the penalty of our past sins which blind us to the things of God ; and, secondly, as an opportunity for showing that we are not seeking spiritual comfort or satisfaction for ourselves, but are offering ourselves loyally and lovingly to the service of our Master. But of this we shall speak later.

(6) All these methods of combating Pride are *negative* in character. They consist in saying No, in various tones and degrees of emphasis, to each and every temptation to self-assertion. This procedure is most useful and quite indispensable ; but it is not sufficient of itself to conquer the enemy ; it may expel him for the moment, but cannot be confident of preventing his return. It must be supplemented by a *positive* method, whereby the soul shall be saved from Pride by being turned to worthier aims ; shall be saved from the assertion of self by being made the devoted servant of Jesus Christ. We have seen that Baptism communicates to us the seed of

the risen life of Christ as well as the seed of His death. It is through the development of this Christ-life within us that the work of mortification will be fulfilled, and pride finally overcome. Mortification, with its call to repentance, is like the Baptist preparing the way of Christ, making straight a road for Him into a heart that is being cleansed from sin. This indwelling life of Christ is what we have now to consider.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHRIST-LIFE

DETACHMENT and mortification are a hard discipline to carry through. But we have seen that there shines therein the light of a "hope" and a "life" which shall take the place of the world from which we are to stand aloof and of the carnal nature which we are to crucify. If we detach ourselves from the world, it is in order that we may attend upon God and listen to His voice without distraction. If we mortify sinful habits, it is through the communicated power of Him who died for our sins and rose again for our justification.

Hitherto we have merely reminded ourselves from time to time of this divine life which is the goal of detachment and mortification, and which, by the light which it casts behind it, helps us to persevere in the work of purification. But now, having treated of the processes which prepare us for it, we must consider what it is and how we appropriate it.

It is, first of all, the life of God Incarnate. We may, indeed, afterwards think, with all reverence, of the Godhead apart from the incarnation ; but, in

any case, our avenue of approach to God as He is in Himself is through the life of Jesus Christ. No man cometh to the Father but by Him. And the life of Christ which we are to receive will have two characteristics—one belonging to Him as God, and the other flowing forth from Him as Incarnate. The first is Love and the second is Humility.

It is in these two qualities that the Divine life is manifested in us ; in these our spiritual life consists.

Without humility there can be no spiritual life at all. If we are to stand in any close relation to God at all, that relation must first and foremost be one of humility. The man who can face God in an attitude of self-complacency, self-importance, self-conceit, only shows that he knows nothing either of himself or God.

But humility has many stages. At its lowest it is an intellectual conviction of our own nothingness, and less than nothingness, in comparison with God.

If we are to think truly of the Maker and Source of all things, it can only be by recognising that we are nothing and have nothing of ourselves ; that the nature in which He made us is in itself an emptiness and a hunger, which can only be filled at all by His gifts, and ultimately only by Himself.

We must remember that the spiritual life is in no sense a business partnership between ourselves and God, in which we contribute so much in the way of capital and God makes up the rest. Rather we shall confess that all which we have ever contributed of ourselves is just the perversion and ruin

of God's gifts by self-will, which is itself a distortion of God's gift of freedom.

But we may recognise these facts without being the least humble. So far we have a fact coldly conceived by the reason, and that is not enough. We only become really humble by the power of love ; humility is made perfect in love. Love is, alike in things human and divine, the consummate teacher of humility. The genuine lover is humbled by the sense of his own unworthiness. If he is not thus humbled he is no true lover ; his love is only self-love. And much more obviously must love produce humility when He whom we love is the Lord Jesus. Then we despise ourselves for all things that we have pursued in preference to Him ; we hate ourselves for our neglect of Him ; we take vengeance on ourselves for the outrages we have committed against Him. This is something of what humility means to a Christian. Thus humility may have its origin in a mere rational perception of our nothingness apart from God ; then love breathes upon this perception, and lo ! it becomes a passion of self-abasement and self-abhorrence.

We see now that this nothing in which we consist is a nothing which thought itself something, which claimed for itself rights and possessions, which presumed to ignore Him in whose hands our breath is and whose are all our ways, which forgot or denied the giver in the very midst of the multitude of His gifts. And we feel, too, the worthlessness of those things which we had pursued apart from God.

But let Walter Hilton, a true lover of Jesus, tell us how love begets humility. "When once love openeth the inner eye of the soul for to see this truth (that mankind is as naught), then beginneth the soul to be really humble ; for then through the sight of God it feeleth and seeth itself as it is ; and then doth the soul forsake the beholding and leaning upon itself, and fully falleth to the beholding of Jesus. And when it doth so, then setteth the soul naught by all the joy and worship of the world." ¹ "Thus is the soul made humble, as I understand, by the working of the Holy Ghost, that is, the gift of love ; for He openeth the eye of the soul to see and love Jesus, and He keepeth the soul in that sight restfully and securely ; and He slayeth all the stirrings wonderfully and privily and softly, and the soul wotteth not how. And also He bringeth in by that way verily and lovely the virtue of humility. All this doth love." ²

Moreover, if it is true that humility is perfected by love, and can never grow to its fulness apart from love, so it is also true that such genuine humility deepens and strengthens the love from which it proceeds.

Such humility, on which love has shone, is a keen and bitter feeling of weakness and destitution apart from God ; of a hunger which gnaws the vitals of the soul, of a spiritual darkness which can be felt. And this experience can but increase our love and devotion to Him who alone and fully can meet our needs.

¹ "Scale of Perfection," p. 260.

² Ibid., p. 263.

The first feeling of love for Christ has turned to corruption all the comeliness of the world ; it has stripped off all our self-complacency, and caused us to abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes. And now the soul, humbled and empty, turns with a yet hungrier love to the Bread of Life. Here let Hilton speak for us : " The less thou feelest that thou art, or that thou hast of thyself through humility, the more thou covetest for to have of Jesus, through desire of love. . . . I mean that humility which a soul feeleth through grace, in the sight and beholding of the endless being and the wonderful goodness of Jesus. . . . And this is lovely humility ; for in respect of Jesus (who is truly all), thou art just nothing, but art as a vessel that standeth ever empty, and as if nothing were therein, as of itself ; for do thou never so many good deeds outward or inward, until thou have and feel that thou hast the love of Jesus, thou hast just nothing. For with that precious liquor only may the soul be filled, and with none other. And forasmuch as that thing alone is so precious and noble, therefore whatever else thou hast, or what thou dost, honour and esteem it as nothing as to rest in, without the sight and the love of Jesus." ¹

And we may further note that also in our dealings with other men love and humility are intertwined in something of the same fashion. Only when we love our neighbour can we humble ourselves to seek his good alone, and not any profit, spiritual or other, for ourselves by means of him. Love makes us

¹ " Scale of Perfection," p. 188-9.

humble and unselfish in our work. The true friend does not use friendship in order to secure pleasure or profit for himself, but seeks the good of the friend for the sake of the friend himself. And, conversely, when we thus work humbly for our neighbour's good, considering his profit and not our own, we come to love him more because we understand him better. We see the goodness of his heart, and the weakness and struggles of his will ; we love him for what he would be and might be and is not ; and we would bring him to know with ourselves the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

Love, then, perfects humility by raising it from the level of an intellectual persuasion to that of a spiritual experience. Apart from love, there would be nothing but argumentation to feed humility on ; and the way would be open to endless self-sophistication and self-questionings. We shall ask, Is the conviction of our nothingness really genuine ? Do we actually believe in it and sincerely accept it ? Or is it rather the case that these attempts to argue ourselves out of pride end in just making us proud of our arguments ? Now these heart-searchings mean that, as long as the understanding is made the main basis for spiritual truth, we are never clear of scrupulosity, or the action by which the mind worries and tortures itself concerning the adequacy of its own operations. This is especially apt to be the case with regard to repentance, a state which is obviously cognate to humility. People make themselves utterly miserable, sometimes to the extent of despair, frenzy, or suicide, through exam-

ining and re-examining themselves as to the exact degree to which they have mentally consented to temptation, as to the reality of their repentance, or the sufficiency of their confessions.

Books of spiritual guidance are much occupied with suggesting remedies for scrupulosity ;¹ foremost amongst these they prescribe prayer and absolute obedience to a director ; but perhaps it would be well, in the first place, to diagnose the malady a little more deeply.

We observe, then, that scrupulosity is due to the isolation of the understanding from the other elements of our nature. Divorced from the affections and the will, it falls into a habit of doubtfulness and dread with regard to God and itself. And this is most natural.

The understanding itself is not a principle of union but a principle of severance ; it operates by distinguishing itself from its objects and holding them apart from itself. Consequently, when we are under the sway of the abstract understanding, God ceases to be a Father to whom we are united in closest bonds of affection ; standing in an outside relation to us, He becomes an object of intensest fear. The scrupulous person adopts what we may imagine to have been the behaviour of a conscientious Jew questioning himself as to the exactness with which he is fulfilling the minute requirements of the Mosaic law. And this comparison suggests also the only ultimate cure of the disease, namely,

¹ "Directorium Asceticum," vol. ii., article xi. ; "Holy Wisdom," section 11, chapters 18-22.

the substitution of the spirit for the letter, and the rehabilitation of the heart in its proper position. If God is not to be the occasion to us of unworthy and degrading scruples, we must cease to stand before Him as aliens and exiles, but must come close to Him and claim Him as our Father in the confidence of filial love. The understanding had exiled us from Him ; love brings us back to our inheritance in Him.

Accordingly, when we are assailed by morbid doubts as to the reality of our humility or repentance, we must just refuse to argue ; we must summon the affections and the will to the rescue of the poor, self-torturing reason.

We must raise our hearts to God in that love which is the one true bond of union. Then we shall have no occasion to argue ourselves into humility or repentance, or to discuss the success of the operation ; these states will be the spontaneous and necessary outcome of love, and will prove their reality by their action. And if we find it hard thus to focus the affections on God, because the heart is paralysed and cannot act at our bidding, then the will must be used, and we must go about our duties with steadfast and quiet obedience. By this means the understanding will be gradually stilled, and love will soon regain its proper supremacy.

The Christ-life of love and humility is communicated to us through the Sacraments. In the first great Sacrament we are baptized into Christ, put on Christ, are buried with Him, and raised to a new life with Him. And in mortification, as we have seen,

we are simply making effective this Sacramental fact of having died with Christ.

We saw also that mortification, or the starving of the sin-life, must be accompanied by the feeding of the Christ-life, the germ of which is given to us in that same Sacrament of Baptism. And it is in the Holy Eucharist that we receive the divinely appointed food of the Christ-life. In fact our progress in religion is very much a process by which we so digest and assimilate this food that it becomes nourishment for the whole spiritual nature.

Christ said, "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life ; and I will raise him up at the last day." ¹ From this it is clear that merely to receive the Holy Sacrament is not the same thing as to eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood, since it is obviously possible for a man to receive that holy food without thereby receiving eternal life now and the pledge of resurrection hereafter. If he is really to feed his soul on Christ's flesh and blood, and so to find eternal life here and hereafter, two things are needful. First, his soul must come to Holy Communion in a healthy state, otherwise it will no more be nourished by its food than a fevered and unhealthy body will be nourished by such things as bread and wine ; nay, in such a case either soul or body will be harmed instead of benefited. And, secondly, the Divine food thus received by a healthy soul must be digested by prayer and meditation.

Many people come regularly to Communion without thinking very much of the first condition, and

¹ S. John vi. 54.

without any thought at all of the second. And this is one reason why they do not make more progress in the spiritual life. I will not deal here with the former of these conditions, which mainly consists of repentance, and so belongs to mortification.

The second condition, namely, prayer and meditation, must be introduced here because it is the means by which Christ, received in the Eucharist, enters into possession of our whole soul, not only exalting our feelings at the moment of reception, but especially feeding and nourishing the will, as it turns to Him and waits on Him and listens to Him at other times in tranquil worship and holy aspiration. Only too often Christian people end their spiritual life just where it ought to be beginning.

The reception of Christ in the Holy Eucharist is to be the beginning of a communion with Him which is meant to spread and grow, and pervade their whole nature and all their everyday life.

Some one may say, "I do not understand what you want. I make some sort of preparation, and come at regular times to receive my Saviour in Communion. What more is needed?" I answer, "Only this is needed, that, having received Him, you shall speak to Him ; that, since He has been pleased to be born in your soul, you should with Mary ponder the meaning of that great mystery, and with the Wise Men offer to Him all the treasures of your heart and reason and will. You are firmly convinced that in Communion you have really received Him and not a mere sign or symbol of

Him, and are ready to maintain your conviction with spirit against any one who impugns it. What then? When He is really and truly there, have you not a word to say to Him? Does not the very strength of your championship of His real Presence convict you of grievous coldness and lack of courtesy to Him who is actually present? He is present to teach you: when do you kneel down and listen reverently and quietly to His voice? He is present, in boundless condescension, as your Friend: where is the sweet intimacy of your familiar intercourse with Him? He is present to strengthen you for the doing of the Father's will: where is your meditation on *His* perfect obedience to that will, and your offering of your own will to Him, to be guided by Him after His example?

This neglect is the more calamitous because, properly understood and used, the Holy Eucharist is the great school of humility and love.

For (a) in the Eucharist Sacrifice we contemplate the perfect exemplar of these qualities.

The Holy Eucharist is the memorial of Christ's Passion, of the utter self-humiliation and "the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ thus dying for us."

And (b) we feed ourselves on His Sacrifice. We nourish our souls on the Body broken and the Blood poured out upon the Cross. So the Love and Humility which are the essence of His nature, eternal and incarnate, are not only examples to be contemplated but a living force communicated to us, a living Bread which has the potency of eternal life.

Every time we receive the Holy Sacrament we not only proclaim and confess that the love and humility exhibited in His Passion are the ideal of our own lives, but we also receive the vital power by which the ideal can be realised by ourselves, or rather can realise itself in us.¹ It follows from this that our acts of sacramental communion, however devoutly made, are not to be regarded as self-contained and complete in themselves. Rather they are incidents in a life of communion, they are the strengthening of the Christ-life within us, a life which is to be continuous and progressive, a life which is to take up into itself every capacity of our nature, every energy of our reason and will and affections. The issue of our communion is to be "that we may continue in that holy fellowship," "that we may evermore dwell in Him and He in us."

And meditation and prayer are the means by which the sacrifice of Christ, given as our food in the Sacrament, is assimilated by ourselves, the means by which each part of our nature is thus gathered up into the Christ-life of love and humility. The Christ-life itself, and its orderly growth in us, is the ultimate end that we have in

¹ "The above-named (weapons) derive their value from the merits and grace purchased for us by the Blood of Christ ; but this weapon is the very flesh and blood joined to the soul and divinity of Christ. With the former (prayer and spiritual exercises) we fight against our enemies in the strength of Christ ; with the latter we fight against them together with Christ, and Christ fights against them together with us" ("Spiritual Combat," chap. 1.).

view ; sacramental communion and meditation are the joint methods whereby that end is progressively achieved. For instance, humility and love must be the subject of our self-examinations before communion. How have we fared in the development of these virtues ? What are the obstacles that have thwarted their growth in us ? What were the occasions on which we most signally failed to exhibit them ?

So again, humility and love form the general intention with which we receive the Sacrament. We communicate in order that the loving self-humiliation of our Lord, there given to us, may feed the Christ-life of love and humility in us.

And in our meditation we make each capacity of our nature an element in one great burnt-offering of praise, in which reason, will, and affections are offered upon the altar of the Divine life within us, to be thereby unified and cleansed and consecrated.

CHAPTER VII

MEDITATION

MEDITATION in its simplest form is devotional reading of the Bible with a view to increasing our love of God. It must be distinguished from philological study of the Scriptures, which is concerned with their language, grammar, or translation ; from their critical study, which deals with questions of authenticity, date, and credibility ; and from their theological study, which uses the sacred text in the formulation, proof, or disproof of dogmatic statements of faith. Meditation may be assisted by all these, but is distinct from them in that it is occupied rather with the will and affections than with the inquiries of the intellect.

Many good Christians have been set against meditation, and prevented (to their own grievous loss) from undertaking it, because it has been presented to them as a complicated exercise, hedged about with manifold regulations, and cut up into minute sections divided off by hard-and-fast walls of partition. They despair of grasping its intricacies and keeping its rules, and so hold aloof from it altogether. It is worth insisting, therefore, that all the essentials of meditation are fulfilled if a man,

after asking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, reads a chapter, or part of a chapter, of the Bible with a view to spiritual edification, and then kneels down and by prayer applies the sense of the passage to his own will and conscience. Let him read, for instance, S. Luke's story of the infancy of our Lord, not busying himself primarily with noting the hebraisms in the Magnificat, or discussing the sources from which the author derived his information, or weighing the exact theological significance of Christ's growth in knowledge, but thinking simply of "the kindness and love of His blessed appearing." Then on his knees let him bewail his own stubborn pride and selfishness, and pray that the love and humility of the Child Jesus may be given to him and manifested in his daily life, especially on those occasions when he knows he will be most tempted to self-love. As he makes progress in meditating, the passages of Scripture which he reads will become shorter, and the work of his soul upon them will become longer. At last only a few verses, or a few words, will be needed to form the foundation on which the meditation of his heart may be built. Moreover, the text of the meditation need not be in the words of Scripture, but in those of some spiritual writer; and again, the meditation may be on some Christian virtue or doctrine of the faith, instead of on the life of Christ. But however this may be, one and the same principle holds throughout, namely, that meditation is mainly, and almost exclusively, a matter for the conscience, the will, and the affections. We

are concerned in it with bringing our shortcomings home to our conscience, directing our will to their removal, and (both as cause and effect of this removal) setting our affections on things above.

The imagination and the discursive reason are of little use, and their sphere should be sternly restricted, as they often do more harm than good.

Only when imagination and reasonings are quieted and put to rest can any profitable meditation begin at all.

If then we start, as we are generally advised to do, by giving full play to these operations of the mind, we only increase the difficulty of engaging in the proper work of meditation, for which the calm and concentrated attention of the will is requisite. In meditation we are not to develop doctrinal theses, to rehearse controversial arguments, or to point homiletic morals. If we do such things, we are in danger of ministering to our own pride, and are worse than wasting our time as far as the true aim of meditation is concerned. And these are just the things that we almost inevitably do if we give a free rein to the imagination and the reasonings of the intellect. There is a time for all things. When we meditate we are not to think of the edification of others but of the edification of ourselves ; not of preaching to others, but of preaching to our own conscience ; not of directing the conduct of our own neighbour, but of directing our own will to God.¹

¹ Clergymen are often tempted by the devil to turn their meditation into a work of sermon-making. For the reasons

This, then, is one reason why images and reasonings are not to be over-encouraged in meditation, namely, because they often divert our attention from the true end of this exercise, which is to lift up our own hearts to God with contrition and devotion and to gain thereby that grace of communion with Him which will make us more efficient in rendering whatever service He requires of us.

A second reason is that whilst the imagination and the intellect may help us at the beginning to raise our thoughts to higher thoughts, yet they become more and more unnecessary as we make progress in the work. At first, when our minds are full of distractions and bad desires, it will be a real help to us if we substitute good images and desires in the place of evil, by reading a whole chapter of the Bible or (what is really the same) reading a few verses and letting the imagination freely fill in the outlines of the picture. Thus we shall at least be constraining our minds to attend to heavenly subjects and keeping them from perverse and vain thoughts. But afterwards, as we gain more control over the stream of consciousness, such procedure will be less needed, and if unduly indulged will be a hindrance to the free action of the will.

Let us suppose that we are brought into the presence of some person who, we are told, has con-

given above a stern and uncompromising resistance must be made to this temptation. It will help them to do this if they remember that, *indirectly*, their sermons will profit enormously by genuine meditation : for they will then know what they are talking about when they speak to others of spiritual things.

ferred great benefits upon us, but with whom we have hitherto had no familiar intercourse. In order that we may behave ourselves properly in his society we let our imagination paint vivid pictures of his good deeds to us, and on the ground of them we set our reason to fashion arguments and motives for gratitude and affection ; and with our minds full of these images and reasonings, we manage to stammer out a few incoherent words of gratitude. But as more time is spent in his company and we get to know him better, it is no longer necessary for us to argue ourselves into a right frame of mind. We have but to remind ourselves of his goodness to us, nay, at last we have but to put ourselves in his presence, and the thought of his lovingkindness will call up at once the devotion of our will and the fervent gratitude of our heart. To give free play to our memory and imagination and reasoning would only thwart and hinder the much more important operation of our will and affections ; it would keep us back from that full and loving intercourse, that free and voluntary obedience, which are the truer expression of our gratitude.

On these principles, then, let us take the following as a simple example of meditation on our Lord's Nativity.

First, we place ourselves in God's presence, praying that we may be preserved from distractions, and repeating with all earnestness the *Veni, Creator Spiritus*.

Secondly, we read our appointed passage of Scripture with quietness and devotion.

Thirdly, we let our thoughts rest for a few moments on the image of the Holy Child in the manger.

Then, fourthly, we pass at once to the operations of the will. We make an *Act of Contrition*, that is, of sorrow and of indignation against ourselves for our hardness and self-will and pride.

Then will follow an *Act of Faith*.—"Thou, O Lord, who didst lie an helpless infant in the stall of the inn, art the Eternal Word, by whom all things were made, in whom they consist, and by whom they are sustained. All power in heaven and earth is Thine, and Thou hast promised to be with us always, even to the end of the world."

This will lead to an *Act of Hope*.—"Therefore I know that Thou canst and wilt make me whole, delivering me from the power of self-love, . . . especially through the power of Thy Eucharistic presence in my heart."

Then an *Act of Love*.—"I love Thee, O Jesus, for Thine infinite love to me; I yield myself to Thee and Thy service. Help me to love and trust Thee more, and for Thy sake to love my neighbour as myself."

An *Act of Resignation*.—"I resign myself to bear cheerfully any crosses and troubles and temptations that may come upon me. I will gladly accept them as punishment for my sins, and as the path along which I can flee from pride and draw near to Thee in Thy great humility."

A *Resolution*.—"In particular I resolve that, by Thy Divine help, I will be watchful to mortify my

pride on this (and this) occasion, when I know that I shall be tempted to give way to it."

We shall dwell on each of these Acts as long as we can profitably do so. Then with great devotion we may end with the *Anima Christi* and an "Our Father."¹

Such a method of meditation illustrates, at any rate, that combination of qualities which is essential for success. These qualities are *unity of topic* and *variety of aspect*. In the first place the mind's natural tendency to wander must be coerced; the attention must be focussed on one definite subject, and this focussing will be most easily accomplished when the will, not the flighty imagination, is the faculty mainly employed. And, secondly, this single and persistent topic must be approached from various points of view, which will mutually confirm and illustrate each other. Thus, in the scheme suggested, the will, focussed steadily on the Nativity of Christ, will pass from contrition to love, from hope to resignation. The needful element of variety is provided, and each later act will tend to vivify and strengthen those which have gone before; contrition will be deepened by love, hope will be purified by resignation. In insisting on this combination of qualities, we are merely applying certain general laws of attention to the special case of meditation. Thus Professor James, in his "Text-book of Psychology," quotes Helmholtz as saying,

¹ The type of meditation here suggested follows the lines of the Acts of the Will, as described by Father Baker in "Holy Wisdom," the third section of the third treatise.

"The natural tendency of attention, when left to itself, is to wander to ever new things; and so soon as the interest of its object is over, so soon as nothing new is to be noticed there, it passes, in spite of our will, to something else. If we wish to keep it upon one and the same object, we must seek constantly to find out something new about the latter, especially if other powerful impressions are attracting us away." And Professor James continues, "These words are of fundamental importance, and if true of sensorial attention, how much more true are they of the intellectual variety. The *conditio sine quâ non* of sustained attention to a given topic of thought is that we should roll it over and over incessantly, and consider different aspects and relations of it in turn. Only in pathological states will a fixed and ever monotonously recurring idea possess the mind."¹

Thus, in the case of meditation, the variety in our acts of will helps us to concentrate our attention upon the subject of the meditation. And, on the other hand, the more interest we take in a subject, the more variety do we see in it. As we focus our attention upon it, it reveals a new wealth of qualities, all subtly interconnected and suggesting each other mutually by some rational law. Thus, in proportion as we are in earnest about spiritual life, the richer and more suggestive will become the various acts of will in which it will manifest itself.

In this connection the spiritual genius will be the man in whose mind "thoughts bud and sprout

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 227.

and grow" out of a vividly realised interest in some spiritual truth, the man who can move easily and spontaneously from one aspect to another without wandering from the concrete unity of the topic in hand.

And now we pass naturally to consider the principal difficulties which meet us in the practice of meditation.

The first great difficulty consists in distraction. The images of outward things, of worldly interests, of work waiting to be done, of daily cares and anxieties, press in upon the soul and prevent it from concentrating its attention upon the things of God. And, worse still, guilty memories and evil desires are quick to take advantage of the solitude and aloofness from the external world in which we have placed ourselves, in order that they may assert their dominion and make their power felt. It seems, indeed, as though we had driven the world out only in order that the flesh and the devil might entrench themselves more strongly in our heart. Hence proceed weariness and disgust, and the notion that we are only making things worse by this attempt at attention and isolation. "Because thou art not reformed, therefore when thy soul draweth into herself from all bodily things and delights, thou findest nothing but emptiness, darkness, and heaviness; so that thou thinkest it a hundred years till thou be out again to some bodily delight or vain thoughts; and it is no wonder, for he that cometh home to his house, and findeth nothing but stink and smoke and a chiding wife, he

will run quickly out of it. Even so thy soul, finding no comfort in itself, but black smoke of spiritual blindness, or great chiding of guilty or fleshly thoughts crying out upon thee, that thou canst not be in peace, verily it will quickly be weary of being alone and recollected until it be out again." ¹

The only remedy against distraction, whatever be its nature and origin, is a firm determination. We must set our face as a flint, and persevere in spite of it. "If thou wilt find Jesus thou must suffer awhile the pain of this dark conscience, and abide awhile therein. And here also thou must be careful that thou take Jesus Christ into thy thoughts against this darkness of thy mind by busy prayer and fervent desire to God. Think stiffly on the Passion and on His humility, and through His might thou shalt arise." ²

If these distractions obstinately interfere with the acts of the will, which have been described, we may turn from these acts for a time to some set forms of devotion, such as the Penitential Psalms, after which we may let our mind rest on the image of Christ in Gethsemane saying to S. Peter, "Couldst thou not watch with Me one hour?" Then with quiet persistence we shall return to the subject of our Meditation, sure that we please God better by this steadfastness in the face of difficulties than we should by experiencing ecstasies and raptures of devotion which cost us nothing. Such steadfast perseverance in our exercises is the choosing of Christ in spite of the stress and pressure of tempta-

¹ "Scale of Perfection," p. 76.

² Ibid., p. 76.

tion, the preferring of Christ to the world even when the world is most insistent in its claims upon us. This is a devotion which means real humility and sacrifice, and is precious in the sight of God.

And the second great trial that besets us in Meditation is the alternation between apparent success and apparent failure. One day we experience warm feelings of devotion, and hope that this shows us to have attained to real love of God ; but the next day our heart is utterly cold and dull and lifeless, not because of the intrusion of distracting images (which was the first difficulty), but through sheer apathy and blank indifference.

We stare straight in front of us, and twirl our thumbs, and experience no feelings either good or bad. What does it mean ? It means that we are not yet at home in the presence of God ; our will is not yet fixed in quiet devotion on His service. We have been accustomed to live by worldly emotions and desires ; accordingly, when we turn to God, our religion is at first a religion of emotion. Our conversion is at the beginning an exchange of worldly emotion for religious emotion, and it is the character of all emotion to be unstable and transitory, to ebb and flow and have no fixed permanence.

We are not troubled by this whilst living a worldly life. Then, when an emotion fades away, it is followed by a different one, and variety compensates for lack of permanence. But now in our meditations we sacrifice this variety, and direct our emotions to God alone. In this case the ebb of emotion leaves

the mind blank and vacant ; this particular feeling dies away, we prevent different feelings from taking its place, and there is as yet nothing else to fall back upon. Now we must meet this trial, which is a bitter one, by transferring the essence of our religion from the transitory to the permanent, from the feelings to the will. We must exercise and train the will in the service of God ; and we can do this most profitably when emotion has utterly failed and left the heart bare and cold and dead. We must return to the act of the will, especially the acts of Contrition, Faith, and Resignation, and to the forming of firm, practical resolutions in the matter of conduct. " It is thus," says Tauler, " that the spiritual strength of martyrs is brought forth in the barrenness and dryness of their meditations and fervour ; and, although these spiritual martyrs are filled with many sorrows, yet they love God and long for true virtue as much as the others. Such men are much troubled in this life, so that they do not know which way to turn because of their affliction. They rest, however, on faith, hope, and love, alone, in great darkness ; for they will not sin whatever befalls them because at all times they bear about with them a clean and humble heart ; while they are much afflicted by seeing the grace enjoyed by other men, always imagining that it is their own fault that they have not the same grace, and that they do not strive enough to gain it. However, when they seek it more diligently, they only become more and more barren and hard within, like stone, and sometimes they lose all patience, and become the more inconsolable and

miserable. . . . They hate all sin, because sin is displeasing and abhorrent to God ; and they know this so well that they would not willingly anger God. At last they make up their minds to be patient, although it is hard to them ; and they suffer and wait till God sends relief, for they see that they can make no progress. Thus God teaches them to be resigned and to submit, leaving all things in His hands ; and thus they become more like unto the others, who flourish in more grace ; while in one sense they are much nobler, for in this grade men are more like Christ, whose life was full of suffering. These spiritual martyrs are the poorest in their own esteem, but in the sight of God they are the richest ; according to their own ideas they are the farthest off from God, and yet they are the nearest. They imagine that of all they are the castaways, and yet they are the very elect.”¹

As we persevere in this training of the will, we shall from time to time be visited by waves of sensible devotion. We shall take them as they come, and use them as encouragements ; but we must not rest upon them. They may help us to lift up our will to God more easily, but it is this lifting up of the will which is the essence of true devotion, not the feelings which come and go. We shall not look for nor expect them. We shall remember that it is through the Cross alone that we can come to Christ, and shall be ready to endure suffering and practise self-denial in spiritual as well as in carnal things. The union with Jesus Christ,

¹ “The Inner Way,” p. 257.

which is the object of Meditation, must be primarily an union with Christ crucified, because the crucifixion is the epitome of that self-humiliation of the Saviour which enables us sinners to have any contact with Him at all. And an union with Christ crucified implies a readiness to forego all spiritual self-seeking or self-indulgence. "True holiness and spirituality consists not in, nor is produced by, exercises which are pleasing to us and agreeable to our nature, but by such only as nail that nature, with all its works, to the Cross ; and, renewing the whole man by the practice of evangelical holiness, unite him to his Crucified Creator."¹ So, too, St. John of the Cross speaks of those who "think it enough to deny themselves in the things of this world without purging away all self-seeking in spiritual things. Hence it comes to pass that when any of this solid devotion presents itself to them, which consists in the annihilation of all sweetness in God, in dryness, in distaste, in trouble, which is the real spiritual Cross, and the nakedness of the spiritual poverty of Christ, they run away from it as from death itself. They seek only for delights, for sweet communications and satisfaction in God ; but this is not self-denial, nor poverty of spirit, but rather spiritual gluttony."²

God wants to treat us as reasonable men and women who have deliberately sworn allegiance to Himself and are setting themselves with serious purpose to carry out their oath, not as children

¹ "Spiritual Combat," p. 36.

² "Mount Carmel," p. 88.

who must be coaxed with sweets and caresses. We must direct our wills to Him, as to one who has the sovereign right to dispose of us as He pleases, to set us our tasks, and to expect from us the tribute of prompt and ready obedience. As we gradually train ourselves to do this, we shall cease to be either awkward or hysterical in His presence but shall conduct ourselves as soldiers standing at attention, listening for the word of command, and ready to execute it with the calmness and precision which come from discipline.

At first there will be a large measure of force and constraint in this direction of the will to God. But this will shortly become less, especially when the subject-matter of our meditation, in connection with which the acts of the will are made, is the Life or Passion of Jesus Christ, and when the meditation on Jesus is conjoined with the sacramental reception of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. The operation of the will is not only made easier by habit, but by the supreme loveliness of its object. And as we continue to contemplate Jesus, and grow more able to concentrate our soul upon Him, His yoke will become easy and His burden light ; we shall not have to drive ourselves into His presence and force ourselves to remain there, we shall feel that it is good for us to be there ; the grudging obedience of the will is growing into the free loyalty of spiritual love.

"Simon, son of Jonas," said the risen Christ to His disciples, "Lovest thou Me" (*ἀγαπᾷς με*) ? And the word means, Lovest thou Me with the steadfast loyalty of the will ?

At the time the apostle, humbled by his fall, could not trust himself to make that profession. "I love Thee," (*φιλω σε*) he replies—"love Thee with the emotions of my heart." His conversion was a schooling by which love rooted in emotion grew into the love founded on a disciplined will, a love which in the event proved itself loyal unto death.

And this love, growing out of the will, is the final destruction of self-assertion ; only here does it receive its death-wound. There is something selfish in the emotional love with which we begin, and in the desire for sensible sweetness and consolation which goes with it. And there may be selfishness also in the operations of the will before it is turned into spiritual love ; for as long as we are forcing ourselves to attend upon Christ, we may be attending on Him as hirelings looking for a reward which shall compensate them for their irksome service. But spiritual love, founded upon the service of the will, casts out the love of self. Gradually, painfully the soul has come to find its true life in His life, in the incarnate, crucified, sacramental life of Jesus. The love of Jesus is the satisfaction of its deepest hopes and widest needs, a satisfaction in comparison with which all other aims dissolve into oblivion and contempt.

By this love, as we have seen, humility is made perfect ; and humility and love combined form the Christ-life within us—the life which is to take the place of the old life of pride and self-assertion which we had been mortifying. Through the Holy Sacrament, together with this progressive practice of

spiritual prayer and meditation, the Christ-life, the risen life, the life hid with Christ in God, grows strong and effective, and proves itself the all-adequate satisfaction of our being.

CHAPTER VIII

CONTEMPLATION

MEDITATION on the Sacred Humanity and Passion of Jesus Christ is the best possible supplement and aid to mortification. It directs the will and affections to the highest object of devotion. Such meditation purifies the soul from the tyranny of selfish passions, and enlists it in that service of God which is its true life. But it cannot in itself be the final goal of the spiritual pilgrimage. That goal is the union of the human spirit with God. The Incarnation made that union possible for sinners; and meditation on the various scenes in the earthly life of God Incarnate is to help us onward to that union as a fact of spiritual experience. Meditation on the humanity of Christ must, if it is to do its full work for us, lead on to union with His deity, and thereby also to union with the eternal Father and with the Holy Ghost. If meditation stops short of that, it is in danger either of losing itself in a tangle of archæological detail or of sinking to the level of mere earthly emotion, from which, as we have seen, it has struggled to ascend to something higher. In either case we shall be knowing Christ according to the flesh,

not as the satisfaction of the highest needs of the spirit.

Noli me tangere is the warning of the risen Christ to His disciples ; He is not there, in the old earthly scenes, but is risen ; we must touch Him by the help of the Holy Spirit as He exists in His eternal nature in heavenly places. The union to which we must aspire is an union with Christ at the right hand of the Father ; and thereby with the Father Himself and the Holy Spirit, through the grace of the Atonement. This is the union which our Lord promised as the sequel of His Ascension. "If a man love Me, he will keep My words : and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."¹ We see, then, that meditation will only have done its full work by leading on to something else—that is, to contemplation. Meditation is the devotional study of the life in which God manifested Himself in history ; contemplation is the attitude of the soul to God as He eternally is. And since any knowledge which we possess of God Himself comes from that historical manifestation in the life of Christ, contemplation must grow out of meditation in an orderly development. The right attitude to God Himself is determined for us by our study of God Incarnate. In S. Augustine's language, the "Scientia" of meditation leads on to the "Sapientia" of contemplation, and Christ Himself is the point of union.² In

¹ S. John xiv. 23.

² "Scientia ergo nostra Christus est, sapientia quoque nostra dem Christus est. Ipse nobis fidem de rebus temporalibus

meditation we remind ourselves of the presence of God in every word and act of Jesus Christ ; in contemplation we think of the continual presence of God with us, as of something secured for us by the Incarnation. This presence of God is, in fact, the leading idea of contemplation ; the practice of contemplation is the practice of the presence of God. Thus we get in contemplation a further development of those processes of detachment and concentration which were at work in meditation. Meditation is detachment from the things of the world in order to attend to the things of God ; contemplation is detachment from the things of God in order to attend to God. We have seen that in meditation it is necessary to restrict the operations of the understanding and the imagination, in order that the will might fasten upon some special lesson taught by the life of Christ, making an act of self-oblation and allegiance to God in the sphere of some particular duty. In contemplation this restriction on the exercise of the faculties extends even to determinate acts of will. The object of contempla-

inserir, ipse de sempiternis exhibet veritatem. Per ipsum pergimus ad ipsum, tendimus per scientiam ad sapientiam ; ab uno tamen eodemque Christo non recedimus, in quo sunt omnes thesauri sapientiae et scientiae absconditi" (S. Aug. "de Trin." xiii. 19). Compare the beautiful words used by Molinos in a similar context : " Before the soul can be fit to enter into the Presence of the Divinity, and be united with it, she must be washed with the precious blood of the Redeemer, and adorned with the rich robes of His Passion" ("Spiritual Guide," i. 16).

tion is not to build a particular moral resolution on some particular word of Jesus Christ, but rather to make a general oblation of the whole nature to an ever-present God. *Waiting upon God* with loving attention, humble resignation, and absolute self-surrender, is the note of contemplation. "As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; even so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until He have mercy upon us."¹ This is the highest point of concentration; it is the concentration of the whole being in quiet, silent attention upon God, in listening for any indication of His will, together with any reproof or exhortation from Him to our conscience. We are in His presence; we adore Him with silent reverence and are ready to obey His voice. I say "we"; but to practise contemplation with any measure of perfection, to maintain that silent, adoring attitude of attention without distraction or fatigue, is the achievement of none but great Saints, who have schooled their faculties to a very high degree of conformity to the will of God. For us poor sinners, whose path is in the Way of Purgation, it is an ideal to which we can make but a small approach in this world, but which we hope may by God's infinite mercy be realised in His unveiled presence hereafter. Occasionally, indeed, a section of the Church has condemned the whole practice of contemplation under the name of *Quietism*, mainly from a feeling that those who in

¹ Psal. cxxiii. 2.

passive quiescence wait upon God as their supreme Director may thereby be led to neglect the help offered to them in human ministrations. Such a suspicion is ungenerous and unworthy. But it must at the same time be remembered that, whilst contemplation is the natural sequel to and outcome of meditation faithfully performed, it therefore presupposes some real advance in the spiritual life and power of perseverance in devotion. Where these conditions are fulfilled, the quietness and silence of contemplation are the right and proper condition of the soul. Such a soul will profit by teaching like the following : "It concerns thee only to prepare thine heart like clean paper, wherein the Divine Wisdom may imprint characters to His own liking" ; "Know that to fix the will on God with the greatest tranquillity possible is the highest pitch of praying" ; "By not speaking, nor desiring, nor thinking, one arrives at the true mystical silence, wherein God speaks with the soul, communicates Himself to it, and in the abyss of its depth teaches it the most perfect and exalted wisdom" ; "Internal solitude consists in the forgetting of the creatures, in disengaging oneself from them, in a perfect nakedness of all the affections, desires, thoughts, and one's own will. This is the true solitude, where the soul reposes with a sweet and inward serenity in the arms of its chiefest good." ¹ Obviously such instruction would be useless, and worse than useless, to a soul engaged in the early stages of its

¹ "Golden Thoughts from the Spiritual Guide of Miguel Molinos," pp. 52, 62, 116.

struggle with perplexities and temptations ; and perhaps Molinos offered it too indiscriminately to the people of Rome.

But, nevertheless, the attitude described in such teaching, and in similar teaching given by a host of spiritual writers (many of whom have been canonised) is the ultimately right attitude of the soul to God. In fact, those who attempt, however feebly, to follow the practice of contemplation, merely show that they have really learnt the lessons of disillusionment and detachment. The unsatisfying nature of the world and all that is in it is not maintained by them as a paradox whereby they can sharpen their wits and surprise their friends. On the contrary, it is a living truth which has got possession of their whole being, especially of their will and affections. Their soul is athirst for God, even for the living God. Apart from Him, this world is a barren and dry land, where no water is. Neither pleasure, nor success in business, nor culture, nor science, can slake that thirst. Objects of that sort, apart from God, are transitory, fragmentary, and delusive ; they break every promise that they make ; they torment instead of satisfying ; they scatter instead of concentrating ; they lead to despair instead of fruition. Even practical work done for God has to be continually purified and revised by some such practice as that of contemplation, if it is not to be tainted by self-assertion, and so turned into a private hobby subject to the same disqualifications as other hobbies. Contemplation, then, is not the dreamy diversion of

visionary temperaments which shrink from contact with the solid reality of the world, though this is, and will probably long continue to be, the prevalent English view on the subject. In matter of fact contemplation is (*a*) the hardest work in the world, and (*b*) the work of men who are in deadly earnest about getting what they want, and are clear-sighted enough to see where alone it is to be had. If they were less in earnest or less clear-headed they might have been content with the "solid reality" of the world; but as it is, these solidities dissolve as they look at them, and God alone remains as the One to whom their will can be directed, and in whom their hearts can rest. God, in fact, fulfils those requirements which, as we saw in the first chapter, the world cannot fulfil. For (*a*) in the first place through all the flux of things God stands fast and does not change. The solid mountains crumble; our bodies decay; so do our friendships and hatreds; our standards of taste, our political opinions, our ecclesiastical views, shift and alter as we attempt to write them down. If we attempt to satisfy ourselves with these things, they simply fall away, and we are left discontented, with our hunger unassuaged, our emptiness unfilled. "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the work of Thine hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure; they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou change them and shall be changed; but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail." ¹ In God alone can the

¹ Psal. cii. 25-27.

spirit find a permanent rest ; only in union with Him can we possess our own souls and live an eternal life. And it is this union with God in His eternal Nature that contemplation secures to us.

And (b), secondly, the mystery of our nature is that it is one, and yet manifold, an unity in diversity. A satisfaction, to be adequate, must do justice to this mystery. The world, as we have seen, cannot do so. In the worldly life we either sacrifice the unity in an endeavour to satisfy the diversity, treating our nature as a bundle of heterogeneous desires, emotions, and impulses, to be indiscriminately gratified—whence come disgust, weariness, and disappointment felt by the one self dragged hither and thither, dislocated, disintegrated, and divided ; or else we make an arbitrary selection and foster one special interest, whilst the rest are stunted and ignored. In God alone we find what we want, an unity which unifies. Through communion with God the Creator soul and body are recreated in a common origin and united in a common service. A spiritual unity makes itself felt as the ground-plan of human nature ; the disconnected bricks build themselves together into one holy temple acceptable to God. In the presence of God desire is illuminated by reason and reinforced by the will. Our various interests—social, artistic, intellectual, philanthropic—receive their appropriate sanction and attain their cohesion, when dedicated to the One God, who is Himself a Trinity of Persons, whose nature is love, whose effulgence is beauty, and whose word is truth. And it is the unreserved, whole-hearted dedication

of ourselves, all that we are and have, to God that is the essence of contemplation.

Thirdly (c), in anything that we do, in art or science or the practical life, we aspire to perfection. An ideal perfection is the stimulus to our exertions and the canon of our criticism. But, as we have seen, our life in the world only mocks these aspirations, only points the cruel contrast between the aspirations themselves and the impossibility of their attainment. In God they are attained. Not only do love and beauty and truth meet in Him, but He is the perfection of them all ; and that perfection in its solid, substantial reality is given to those who are His. Truth, beauty, and love are not separate and impersonal ideals, fitfully revealed to us in dreams, always hunted and never taken. They are, on the contrary, complementary aspects of a personal life, which is God. Those who live in communion with God are in living touch with that perfection which, apart from God, is a baffling and illusory ideal. Details may be added and outlines filled in, both here and hereafter ; but the ideal itself is realised in us now in its complete all-satisfying perfection, because the ideal perfection of these things is the life of God, of which we are made partakers in this act of contemplation.

Thus in contemplation the soul turns to God, and finds in Him those qualities of permanence, unity, and perfection which have been sought in vain in the world. The soul necessarily seeks these qualities because of the constitution of her own nature, made in God's image ; she seeks them fruit-

lessly in the world because of the constitution of the world, which is essentially transitory, chaotic, and incomplete. The world offers us certain manifestations of goodness, beauty, and truth. Our natural instinct is to pursue each of these for itself, to spend ourselves upon it, and then turn from it in disgust on discovering that it is but a passing, fragmentary, and imperfect thing. The contemplative soul, on the contrary, uses these manifestations, as rungs of a ladder, on which it is to ascend to God, in whom goodness, beauty, and truth exist in their eternal perfection and also in their indissoluble connection with each other. Thus in God the soul has found ^{*} an object in which she can rest.

Everybody professes to seek such an object ; but most of us act in a manner which makes it impossible for us to find it. We will not keep quiet and let our soul dwell upon God. We must be for ever fussing and worrying and arguing. We argue ourselves away from fruition. Contemplation, we maintain, is concerned with abstractions, and we are practical people concerned with practical life. Now the practical aspect of

^{*} "Non si sazia

Nostro intelletto, se il Ver non lo illustra,
Di fuor dal qual nessun vero si spazia.
Posasi in esso, come fera in lustra,
Tosto che giunto l'ha."

DANTE, *Par. iv. 124 seq.*

"Never can our intellect be sated, unless that Truth shine on it, beyond which no truth hath range. Therein it resteth, as a wild beast in its den, so soon as it hath reached it" (Temple Classic translation).

contemplation will come before us in a moment, but first it is worth noting, and will be established more fully in the sequel, that the object of Contemplation is exactly the opposite of *abstract*. An abstract idea is an idea isolated from other ideas with which it is naturally connected. *Extension* is an abstract idea, dealt with in geometry to the exclusion of the other qualities of extended bodies. But the procedure of contemplation is precisely the opposite one. Here certain qualities, such as truth, beauty, and goodness, which are isolated from each other in our ordinary treatment and pursuit of them, are brought together, in a concrete unity, as constituent elements in the personal life of God.¹ In God, whom we contemplate, exist concretely all the treasures of wisdom and love, broken fragments of which are manifested to us in different times and manners. In Him all the scattered threads are gathered up; from Him the passing gleams irradiate and in Him are united. God is the concrete sum of those qualities, which we prize in their separateness and imperfection. He is the fulness of life; by contemplating Him our lives become fuller and richer, more coherent and intelligible. And because it is God, as the meeting-point and perfection of all our ideals, whom we contemplate, it follows that the

¹ So S. Augustine says that God is Wisdom, and this Wisdom is Life, and also Power and Beauty. He goes on: "Bonitas etiam atque Justitia numquid inter se *in natura Dei, sicut in ejus operibus*, distant, tanquam duae diversae sint qualitates Dei, una Bonitas, alia Justitia? Non utique: sed quae Justitia, ipsa Bonitas, et quae Bonitas, ipsa Beatitudo" ("De Trin.," xv. 7).

only method by which we can receive Him is an attitude of passive receptivity, or the quiet and simultaneous concentration of all our capacities in an act of faith.

This faith is sometimes described as "obscure" by mystical writers, and expressly contrasted with "clear intellectual perceptions," with the result that they are themselves condemned as lovers of fog and mist. But the meaning is that, if "that which is perfect is to come," then "that which is in part" must be done away. If God, or the totality of truth, is to be received, we must for the time banish all fragmentary truths from the mind; since the more clearly these are perceived, the greater will be the disturbance and distortion which they occasion. The soul must be deliberately darkened to such candle rays, in order that the sun, which shines upon it, may be recognised as the source and substance of all light.

Further, contemplation is not only an activity (all the more perfect, because restful) by which the soul centres all its powers on its one supreme object; it is also of the greatest use in the practical moral life.

For (a), in the first place, we are enabled by it to deepen and refine the whole temper and spirit of our lives. Plato tells us that the man who contemplates the divine order of the universe becomes divine and orderly in his own character. So he who quietly and submissively waits upon God in His eternal nature, learns to correct his own faults of impatience, or depression, or conceit. He remembers that he is in the presence of One whose

power and wisdom are infinite, that by whole-hearted and humble self-oblation he may be a fellow-worker with God, but that God's work does not depend for its ultimate success on him or his abilities. And this is a very salutary lesson for those engaged in active work ; it enables them to do their work with confidence and humility, and therefore to succeed.

And (b) besides purifying the temper of our life, contemplation enables us to detect faults hitherto unnoticed. As we place ourselves in the sunlight of God's presence, all sorts of stains and flaws and defects spring into sight, which we had not been aware of before, but which all the time had been marring our service. There in the rays of that penetrating search-light they stand revealed—faults of temper, neglect of opportunities, waste of time, and self-seeking in a hundred subtle disguises.

Then (c), thirdly, though contemplation logically follows mortification, or the conflict with our besetting sins, yet it is often of the greatest help to it. Often we do not seem to succeed in a direct assault on sin ; all our arguments and reasonings, self-abasements, and acts of contrition, leave us cold and weak in the presence of temptation. We shall do well, then, if we cease to look inwards, and begin to look upwards, leave the thought of our sins and weakness, and look up to Christ. When the frontal attack fails, the true tactics are to turn the enemy's position by finding a way round and beyond and above it. "Contemplative souls," says Father Baker, "do indirectly yet far more efficaciously

mortify their passions by transcending them, that is, by elevating and uniting their spirit to God with the help of pure intellectual actuations ; by this means forgetting and drowning both their sensual desires, yea, all created things and chiefly themselves, in God ; so that in a temptation they do not turn themselves toward the object, to the end to resist and contradict it, but by a vigorous act of resignation and love they convert their spirits unto God.”¹

And (*d*), lastly, contemplation enables a man, unconsciously to himself, to exert the strongest possible influence for good, an influence which flows not from what he does so much as from what he is. The man who does most real good in the world is not necessarily the man who belongs to the largest number of philanthropic societies ; it may rather be the man whose whole character is moulded by the practice of God’s presence, and who carries God with him wherever he goes. Real philanthropy works on the characters of men, and only by character can characters be touched or converted or refined. Just as some enclosed religious, whose life is one long prayer, may be the most active and beneficent of workers, bringing down God’s blessing through arrows of intercession which pierce the clouds that surround Him ; so the man who, though living in the world, devotes himself in earnest to the work of contemplation, will stand amongst his fellows as a witness to the reality of spiritual things and the practicability of the higher life.

¹ “ Holy Wisdom,” p. 215.

CHAPTER IX

THE GRACE OF CONTEMPLATION

WE have seen that Contemplation has two main characteristics—quietness and receptivity. It consists primarily of the lifting up of the heart to God in silent adoration ; and this implies a special preparedness to receive influences or impressions which may come from God to a heart thus lifted up. What, then, are these influences and impressions ? And how do they differ from the grace which comes in ordinary ways ? First (*a*), we may say generally that grace will mean more, be more intimately felt and more powerfully operative, in a trained and disciplined soul. As good music, or a good picture, means more and has more effect on an æsthetic sense which is trained and educated, and as seed takes root more firmly and bears fruit more abundantly in a soil which has been carefully prepared, so a contemplative soul, which is entirely turned to God, will be specially sensitive to any message of grace which comes from Him, and especially eager to welcome it and act on it. Thus the grace which is given in contemplation will mainly differ from grace

otherwise given, not in any particular form of presentation, but simply in purity and vigour of operation. *Vigour* will be the first characteristic of such grace. Then (b) in ordinary life there is usually in our minds some special intention with which we receive the Holy Eucharist, and some special object which we ask for in our prayers. In such cases grace is God's answer to these special needs, and works by strengthening the will or purifying the affections in some particular respect. But in contemplation we have no special intention, and offer no special supplication. In such a case God's grace appears more distinctly in its character of free spontaneity, as a gift sent on the prompting of His own lovingkindness to a soul which has not asked for any particular gift, but whose whole life is a prayer for grace to do God's will. *Spontaneity* is the second great characteristic of the grace of contemplation.

And (c) in ordinary life, when the human faculties are actively engaged in supplication, the grace of God is always apt to be merged and confounded with our own action. It is uncertain how much of the resultant state of mind represents God's response, and how much our own subjective effort. It is simply an exaggeration of this uncertainty when people argue that the effects of prayer are purely subjective; that the good consists entirely in the aspirations of our soul, not in any answer which God makes to these aspirations. But in proportion as the soul is passive and merely receptive, God's grace is felt to be more distinct and articulate

in its message ; it does not blend its voice confusedly with the voice of the soul, but speaks in clear accents to a soul which is waiting in silence for its utterance. *Distinctness*, then, will be the third characteristic of this grace.

Now these three characteristics of the grace given in contemplation, namely, vigour, spontaneity, and distinctness, combine to produce the conviction that this grace differs in kind from that which is given and received under other conditions. In these three characteristics, the grace of contemplation resembles the utterance of a friend, who speaks to us from without, encouraging or advising or admonishing.

Accordingly God's grace is often *felt as a voice speaking articulately* in the soul. The history of religion abounds in such experiences, from the time of S. Paul onwards, and also before his time in the inspiration of the Prophets, who could clearly recognise the word of the Lord and its message to them, as something quite distinct from their own thoughts and from the speech of their fellow-men. S. Paul's experience is so important and typical that we will quote it in his own words : " It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I cannot tell : or whether out of the body, I cannot tell ; God knoweth), such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man (whether in the body, or out of body, I cannot tell : God knoweth), how that he

was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such an one will I glory : yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities " (2 Cor. xii. 1-5).

Sometimes, again, God's grace, as manifested in Contemplation, is envisaged not as a voice but as a *vision* ; as, for instance in the *Revelations of Divine Love* of which Julian of Norwich writes. And sometimes, as in trance, voices and visions go together ; as in the cases of S. Peter and of Ananias, recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.¹

Now, in considering these apprehensions, the first thing we notice (and it is a very remarkable thing) is the small importance attached to them by the most spiritually minded writers. S. Paul glories, indeed, in his visions and revelations, but simply as evidence of God's power in sharp contrast to his own weakness and infirmities. Similar "phenomena" seem to have abounded in the life of S. John of the Cross, yet he applies very summary treatment to them in *Mount Carmel*. "We must always," he says, "reject and disregard these representations and sensations."² Again, "Let such persons learn to disregard these locutions, and to ground their will in humble love ; let them practise good works and suffer patiently, imitating the Son of God, and mortifying themselves in all things : this, and not the abundance of interior discourses, is the road unto spiritual good." And more strongly still : "Why does God, who is most wise, and ever ready to remove every snare and every stumbling-block

¹ Chaps. x. 9-15 ; ix. 10-16.

² P. 105.

from before us, send us these supernatural visions, seeing that they are so full of danger and so perplexing to us in our further progress?"¹

The reasons which lead mystics to such an attitude are mainly these : (a) The doubt and uncertainty as to the origin of these representations ; a feeling that they may in some cases be delusions sent by the devil ; (b) the danger of being led by them to pride and self-esteem, of being " exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations," in S. Paul's language ; (c) the interference with the true purpose of contemplation by the excitement and variety of such experiences.

What are we to say, then, as to the genuineness of these experiences ? Some, no doubt, are to be ruled out as delusions, and many others will be set aside as insufficiently attested. But we need have no hesitation in accepting many of them as divine messages actually communicated to the soul by the means best calculated to ensure attention. On their behalf we may bring forward (a) the statements of the Bible which, in this case as in many others, are receiving much corroboration from the most modern science and psychology ; (b) the peculiar attitude which, as we have just seen, is adopted towards them by those persons who have had most experience of them. If such experiences had been highly prized, they might, perhaps, in many cases have been invented or imagined ; but when they are regarded as a cross and a real trouble, even as a trial to faith in God's goodness, we have every

¹ P. 226.

reason to accept them as genuine facts. Such an attitude has the same sort of evidential value as the attitude of the first disciples to the appearances of the risen Christ. In each case there is an antecedent reluctance to accept the facts, a reluctance gradually overborne by the force of the evidence.

And (c), as suggested above, it is too easy to understand how God's grace comes to be experienced in these particular ways. When the soul is empty of desires, and silent and receptive, grace is able to present itself in its true character as a real, objective communication from God. This character is obscured when the soul is full of its own wishes and its own operations on them ; then grace works by mingling with them, elevating and refining them ; and consequently does not manifest itself in its true distinctness. *This*, the obscuring of the real nature of grace, is the true problem ; it would be recognised as such, were it not unfortunately too common to be regarded as a problem at all. In the rare cases, however, when the soul is tranquil and passive, God's message comes in unmistakable reality. And, as sight and hearing are the most common forms of receptivity through which ordinary messages are received by us creatures of flesh and blood, it is natural, and indeed inevitable, that such communications from God should be apprehended as voices or as visions. Through the passivity of the soul they are apprehended as real ; through its connection with the body their reality is apprehended as sensational.

On these grounds we may well believe that in

many cases the contemplative soul receives real communications from God, and receives them through the organs of sight and hearing. Spiritual writers insist, indeed, that the sense which apprehends these messages is an interior, not an exterior, sense ; but this means simply that the message is apprehended as spiritual, as coming from God and not from some outside object.

Present-day psychological research confirms this record of experience. Thus Mr. Myers remarks, "It seems likely that central perception (*i.e.*, that which is not occasioned by external stimulus), will shape itself on the types of perception to which the central tracts of the brain are accustomed ; and that the *connaissance supérieure*, the telæsthetic knowledge, however it may really be acquired, will present itself mainly as clairvoyance or clairsaudience—as some form of sight or sound. Yet these telæsthetic sights and sounds may be expected to show some trace of their unusual origin. They may, for instance, be imperfectly co-ordinated with sights and sounds arriving through external channels ; and since they must in some way be a translation of supernormal into sensory terms, they are likely to show something *symbolic* in character." ¹

Thus S. Teresa, speaking of herself in the third person, writes to Father Rodrigo Alvarez : "Two or three years before she began to feel that she was spoken to interiorly, and even to have some visions and interior revelations with the eyes of the

¹ "Human Personality, and its Survival of Bodily Death," abridged edition, p. 202.

soul. . . . When she saw anything interiorly, the representation lasted for a moment, generally speaking ; but it was so deeply impressed on her soul, and produced such wonderful effects that, had she seen those things with her corporeal eyes they could not have seen more clearly" ¹ And further on in the same letter, with a slight difference of phraseology : " Since your Reverence wishes to know something about the visions, behold the manner in which they happen to her. Nothing interior or exterior is seen, because they do not come from the imagination. But without seeing anything, the soul knows what the object is, and whence it is represented to her, and this more clearly than if she actually saw it with her eyes, except that she sees nothing in particular. It is just as if she perceived some person to be near her, though, being in the dark, she does not see any one ; yet she knows for certain that he is near her. This comparison, however, is not sufficient to make the subject clear, because he who is in the dark can tell, by some way or other, that a person is near him, either by hearing a voice or by having known beforehand that the individual is there. But here there is nothing of the kind ; for without any interior or exterior words the soul understands most clearly the object represented to her. But she understands not *how* she knows this ; all she knows is, that it so happens ; and she cannot tell exactly how long it lasts." ²

¹ " Letters of S. Teresa " (T. Baker), p. 100.

² Cf. chap. xxvii. of " S. Teresa's Autobiography," in which other experiences are given.

Thus does a mystic of strong common sense and scrupulous veracity attempt to describe experiences which are in the literal sense ineffable.

At the same time we shall agree with her and the other great mystics in refusing to attribute an especially high importance to them. For, in all such matters, delusion is not only very common, but also exceedingly hard to detect ; whilst in the case of genuine experiences the temptation to pride and presumption increases in proportion to the value attached to them. And, however important or rapturous the content of such messages might be, they would yet be *messages from God*, not *union with God* ; and the latter alone can be regarded as the final and supreme object to which the soul aspires. Voices and visions are, after all, the grace of God coming in a vigorous, spontaneous, and articulate form ; but human nature, made in God's image, yearns for "a higher gift than grace," even for "God's presence, and His very self, and Essence all divine." Communications made through sight and hearing, however divine in their origin and beautiful in their import, would end in causing distraction and pain to a soul which is concentrating all its powers on nothing short of God Himself. Union with God is the final goal of the spiritual pilgrimage, the supreme fact of spiritual experience. If the soul may not have it here, she will patiently train herself to have it hereafter. In either case it is this, and this alone—union with Him, not messages from Him—at which she aims, and with which she will be satisfied.

In the words of Rusbrock, translated by Hello :
" Dieu donne à l'âme une table bien servie ; il y a sur cette table des richesses connues seulement de celui qui les goûte : mais il y a un plat qui manque toujours, c'est celui qui contiendrait la jouissance ravissante. C'est pourquoi la faim va toujours en augmentant. . . . Tous ces transports ne font que l'exciter. Quand Dieu donnerait tout à cette âme, tout excepté lui-même, il ne l'assouvirait pas." ¹

¹ Hello's Rusbrock, pp. 38-9.

CHAPTER X

UNION WITH GOD

HOW, then, is it possible to experience this union with God? This is a most mysterious subject, and must be approached with the greatest reverence and humility, and with a determination not to pretend to knowledge or wisdom which we do not possess.

And at the outset we must distinguish this question from others with which it may easily be confounded. What we are concerned with is not theistic argument for the existence of God, but experience of the presence of God. Again, we are not engaged in absolute philosophisings, which posit God as given in every act of consciousness, and regard the whole of our conscious life as a limited unfolding of God's nature. This kind of philosophy degrades God without exalting man, and we have no use for it. What we are concerned with is the union with God of human souls which are distinct from Him, though made in His image.

Still less are we occupied with grosser forms of Pantheism, which identify God with the world and all that is in it. The experience of God, then, is

not theorisings, theological or philosophical, about God ; nor is it an assertion that we, and possibly everything else, are fragments of God. The state of human nature which we are considering is *experience*, not theory ; and it is *of God*, not God.

How, then, does experience of God differ from these vivid messages from God which we have just considered ? (1) We might begin by comparing this difference with the difference between receiving letters from a friend and seeing him face to face. Such a comparison has its value, which, as we shall see, is great ; but we will first consider in what respect it is defective. Experience of God in this life means more than seeing a friend face to face, and less than seeing God face to face. In the first place, the sight of a friend face to face does not signify an union sufficiently inward to explain what we mean by union with God, an union which takes place in the inmost recesses of the spirit. Our Lord's disciples had known Him face to face in His human life ; after the Ascension they were to have a closer and more intimate communion with Him through the Holy Ghost—a communion so much closer and more intimate that it was expedient for them to forfeit the Bodily Presence in order that the completer form of communion might begin. This spiritual communion is not, of course, limited to the particular experience which we are now considering, but, at any rate, Christ's words teach us the inadequacy of bodily presence as a satisfying image of the highest possible union. On the other hand, *to see God face to face* is an appropriate descrip-

tion of the perfect knowledge or beatific vision, which is reserved for the life in heaven ; it implies an union more full and complete than any experience which is possible on earth. Thus the union of which we are speaking is closer and more spiritual than any face to face intercourse with a friend, and also more imperfect and fragmentary than any face to face vision of God.

Still, the comparison has the one great merit of reminding us that the union with God is personal, and that such an union is possible just because our own nature is made in the image of a personal God. The Personality of God will occupy us in the following chapter ; here it must be taken for granted, and we must be content at present to lay down this principle, that the Christian belief in God as a Personal Being whose nature is love, marks off the Christian experience of union with God from that of other people. To the Christian such an union is intelligible, and in the highest sense *natural*, however deeply mysterious the experience itself must always be.

(2) Union with God, then, is a spiritual experience of God as a person. It is a personal love coming into contact with the personal loving God. These expressions, "contact" or "touch," however inadequate because of their materialistic associations, are yet the best expressions that we can use. They emphasise the immediacy of the experience. We *infer* the personality and character of our friend from the sight of his face and the sound of his voice ; he becomes for us a rational construction built up by

reason out of feelings, these feelings being united by the law of identity and interpreted in the light of our own personality. But the experience of God lies behind the inferences of the understanding ; it takes place in what is sometimes called by mystical writers the *basis*, and sometimes the *summit*, of the human spirit. The meeting of spirit with Spirit transcends the discursive reason, and consists in pure feeling ; it is contact with or consciousness of the presence of Divine love. We may use the term *feeling*, or the more specific term contact, of union with God, to express the fact that it is something which comes with the immediate self-evidence of sensation, apart from the inferential work of the reason. And at the same time we must insist that this feeling is a special kind of experience, purely spiritual, and therefore different from that of the bodily senses. Hence arises naturally the paradoxical language which mystical writers employ in speaking of it. "Dionysius the Areopagite" speaks of "supramundane eyes," and tells us that these mysteries of God "flood the eyeless mind with ideally beautiful beams in this sphere of the impalpable and invisible" ; and that it is "through blindness that we see Him who is above sight," &c.

(3) It follows, as we said before, that such an experience is strictly and literally an ineffable experience ; it passes understanding and cannot be analysed. This is always the character of pure feeling ; it is an ultimate fact, which can only be known by being experienced. So, if a mystic is asked *what* he has experienced in his union with God, he can only

answer that he has experienced God. He can no more explain such a feeling than he can explain a sensation of light or a sensation of pleasure. He was aware of an enveloping Presence, and was filled with an ecstasy of love and joy and contentment, and those who have the same experience will know what he means. Moreover, just because it passes understanding, this experience can be an adequate and perfect satisfaction of our nature. If it were an object of knowledge, union would be exchanged for separateness, and new bridges would have to be provided.¹

The union with God is the consciousness of a presence, which in the nature of the case cannot be grasped by the mind, but which is none the less real on that account. Such an experience is analogous to what psychology records of the subliminal consciousness.² The subliminal consciousness is often described as a sort of receptacle, in which are stored those messages which have not sufficient vigour to cross the threshold of the mind and arrest its attention, and be transmuted by it into items of knowledge. We are told how in states of mental quiescence, natural or induced, these messages can rise from their limbo and give startling proof of their reality. But if there is this

¹ Cf. p. 63. This point, which must be strongly emphasised, is well expressed by Rusbrock: "Si la paix sublime pouvait être connue et conçue, elle tomberait sous nos mesures. Si elle tombait sous nos mesures, elle serait incapable de nous combler, et la paix se convertirait pour nous en une inquiétude éternelle" (Hello, p. 52).

² Cf. James, "Varieties of Religious Experience," p. 511.

subliminal consciousness which warehouses facts too weak to cross the mental threshold, may there not also be a *transcendental* consciousness which apprehends Presences too mighty to enter by the door? There would be a close resemblance between the cases. In each there would be facts which are not manipulated or cognised by the mind: in the former case because they are too small or unintelligible to fix its attention, in the latter because they are too vast to be included under any of its categories. Perhaps, however, instead of recognising a multiplicity of consciousnesses—the subliminal and the normal and the transcendental—it would be better to say simply that there are facts which are either too small or too great for the mind to grasp, and which yet supply the mind with experimental proof of the reality of their existence.

(4) This Spiritual experience of God implies a spiritual medium of sight. Following Plotinus, we may say, that as we see the sun by the light of the sun and not by any other light, so we can only see God by a light which comes from God. In His light we see light. This means that the atmosphere in which God is revealed must be spiritual; only when we are living and moving in a spiritual atmosphere can we hope for any vision of Him. He is self-revealed in the light which flows from Him, and which is Himself. It follows from this that the spiritual life must be conceived as a staircase of ascending steps. As mortification prepares the way for meditation, and meditation leads to contemplation, so contemplation supplies the spiritual atmosphere in which

the human spirit can meet with God. It is very important to remember this truth, namely, that the sphere in which contact with God can take place is spiritual, and not merely intellectual. The prior condition for such contact is not the restless striving, or rigorous abstractions of the understanding, but the quiet receptiveness of the spirit ; and this receptiveness again depends on the purification of the affections from sin and the concentration of the will on obedience to God. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Further, this state of detachment and purification is itself the uprising of the life of God in the soul. That life first works secretly in the processes of disillusionment and mortification, and in the shaping of higher ideals and aspirations ; then, when this work is in some measure completed, it may become manifest to the spiritual vision. Just as ethical ideals must first have been at work, moulding institutions and ways of thought, before they can be explicitly apprehended and formally expressed ; so, in the spiritual world, God must first have worked (and have been suffered by us to work) in our spiritual experience, before we can have experience of Him as the source and substance of that experience. It is because of God's long-continued presence and operations within us, that at last our eyes may be opened to see Him. God is the medium by which we see God. Hence the supreme importance of moral discipline, the control of affections and will ; and hence the fatuous impertinence

of thinking that we can behold God without this discipline, which is God's antecedent working in our hearts, the formation of the atmosphere in which alone He can be revealed.

(5) God, then, can only be experienced in the immediacy of feeling—a spiritual feeling which requires a spiritual medium in order to be felt. And now we come to a further point. Feeling is an affection of ourself ; in all sensation there is an identification of the self, for the time being, with the object of the feeling. The hot feeling is the same as the heat felt ; it is also *our* feeling, a phase or affection of our self. The sensitive nature is identified with the object which it feels. This is so in the case of all sensation : the organ of sense, whilst the feeling lasts, is merged in its object ; whereas in the case of thought, which is occupied in building up objects of knowledge out of sensation, there is always a judicial separation, an aloofness, a dualism between the knower and the known—the sort of distinction which exists between the builder and his bricks.

If, then, God is experienced in feeling, the spiritual self which feels is identified for the moment with its object, though subsequent reflection by the understanding makes the distinction between the two readily and at once. Thus God, who is identical with the medium of sight, is also (at the moment of revelation) identified with the organ of sight. Our spiritual capacity, provided with a spiritual atmosphere by the schooling of the affections and will, feels God as an affection of itself, and is thereby identified with God. “He that is joined unto the

Lord is one Spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 17).¹ There is here no question of the operations of the understanding upon some heterogeneous material : there is rather the fanning into a flame of the spark of the Divine nature which is present in us from the beginning, and which makes us spiritual creatures with an organ of spiritual intuition. Thus we may say that *God in us* is both the medium in which, and the organ by which, we come into contact with God as He is in Himself. In Rusbrock's words, "It is God who, at the base of us, receives God coming to us ; and God contemplates God."²

(6) As to the quality of this feeling of God, it will be with us according to our faith. If we wait upon Him with an attenuated phantom of our self, with the bare abstract form of self-consciousness, He may be revealed to us, as to Plotinus, as the phantom of abstract being. If we wait on Him with all the fulness and richness of our nature, with our affections and will as well as with our reason,

¹ Richard of S. Victor illustrates this by a beautiful simile. God enlightens the soul more and more by the revelation of His own brightness, until at last it transcends its own nature and merges itself in Him ; just as the glow of dawn gradually broadens and intensifies until it passes away into the glory of the sun which was its cause. . . . "*Aurora siquidem paulatim elevatur, elevando dilatatur, dilatando clarificatur, sed miro modo, dum tandem in diem desinit, per promotionis suae incrementa ad defectum venit.*" So, too : "*Dum mens humana semper ad altiora crescit, dum diu crescendo tandem aliquando humanae capacitatis metas transcendit, fit demum ut a semetipsa penitus deficiat, et in supermundanum quendam transformata affectum tota supra semetipsam eat*" (Benjamin Major, v. 9).

² Hello, p. 65.

merely diverting their powers from unworthy objects, freeing them from the distractions of images and desires, and concentrating them lovingly upon Him, then, indeed, we may be filled with all the fulness of God, the fulness of Him who is perfect love, whose love encompasses and wraps us round, and in whom we experience rest and completion and satisfaction. He will be felt, in that ineffable experience, as the plenitude of our own being, as the light of our life and the object of our love. As such we shall know that we possess Him, and that therefore all is well with us.

(7) In this feeling of love, which is our experience of God, dualism is overcome, and we are in loving communication with the centre of truth and existence. The world is no longer an enigma: the mystery of God is made known to living hearts. The outside relation of the restless, inquiring, speculating reason to its object of knowledge is exchanged for a restful personal communion with the truth, based on kinship and devotion. That the inmost secret of the encompassing universe is love; that consequently we need not think of it either as a soulless machine that has no thought for us, or as a fiery-eyed dragon that thinks only of destroying us; that through union with God we are in personal contact with the ultimate truth of things, and have nothing to fear from the spectres and bogeys of an unknowable beyond—this is a very comfortable conviction, gathering together the loose ends of existence, and enabling us to live our lives out in an atmosphere of quietness and security.

And, on the other hand, there is no danger here of our losing hold of our own individuality and becoming lost in God. Rather we may say (paraphrasing Rusbrock) that God arms us against Himself, and invites us to wrestle with Him. All the gifts with which He enlightens and kindles and burns our spirit have for their object that we may safeguard and defend against Him our right to love. Love is the supreme safeguard of individuality. The humility which love teaches will make us feel even more acutely the distinction between ourselves and God. In moments of exaltation a man may feel Him, and in feeling be united to Him : but any such revelations will only prostrate him in deeper abasement before the unutterable Majesty. "Woe is me !" he will exclaim with the Prophet, "for I am undone ; because I am a man of unclean lips : for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts."¹

If, therefore, the feeling of love to God saves us from dualism, that is, rescues us from the fate of being everlastingly strangers and foreigners to the truth of things, and makes us heirs of the universe and members of the household of God ; on the other hand the same feeling of love will save us just as surely from the annihilation of personal life in the indifference of pantheism. Every stage of our ascent (disillusionment, mortification, meditation, contemplation) had been essentially moral, consisting in moral discernment, moral purification, and moral aspiration ; our union with God is but the crown and outcome of a moral process ;

¹ Isa. vi. 5.

and pantheism is the complete negation of all morality.

(8) It follows from all this, that for Christians there is not any sharp line of cleavage between the union with God on the one hand and the normal Christian life on the other. For the Christian, union does not consist in the ecstasy of intellectual abstraction ; rather it results from the harmonious concentration of the whole nature in an attitude of loving obedience to God. Accordingly, when the feeling of God's presence has passed, he does not merely lapse back into a weary, stale, flat, unprofitable state of existence, in which his only hope is that he may before long be lifted above it once more into union with Abstract Being. On the contrary, the union vouchsafed to him in moments of insight survives as an incentive and stimulus to the ordinary duties of life. The Christian life and union with God are homogeneous. Union with God belongs to the Christian life, being its final goal in heaven and (if God so wills) its occasional encouragement on earth. In either case the Christian's life is a systematic training and preparation for union, whether in heaven or on earth. His will and affections have contributed more than his intellect to the attainment of any union which has been granted to him, and his will and affections are strengthened and inspired by union to a more pure and active obedience.

The man to whom God has revealed His presence will go back to the daily round with a new joy in his heart and a new power in his will ; he has

become a more efficient instrument for the carrying out of God's purposes.

We have here an essential difference between Christianity and Neo-Platonism. In the eyes of Plotinus, God is essentially the One; who can neither know nor love, because both knowledge and love would introduce an element of "otherness" or multiplicity into His nature. He is pure abstract Being, from whom all qualities are stripped. Of God Himself nothing can be predicated. The absolute simplicity of His nature confounds human language; opposite expressions can be used of Him with equal propriety, or absence of propriety; as, that He exists or does not exist, is everywhere or nowhere, is free or not free, &c.

And it follows that, as like is known to like, the man who would aspire to union with the Neo-Platonic God must strive after a similar simplicity in himself. He must aim, not at establishing order, harmony, and discipline in his nature, but at killing out diversity altogether. He must make himself not a concrete unity of blended elements, but an abstract unit of pure intellect, fit to hold communion with the Great Abstraction. Accordingly, when his ecstasy is over, he sinks back into a contemptible world of multiplicity, in which he is a stranger, which makes no appeal to him and has no claim upon him. He must just wait patiently, or impatiently, until by a renewed effort of abstraction, applied equally to himself and the world, he can soar once more into union with the One.

But with the Christian things are different. What

he hates is not multiplicity as such, but distraction ; the method by which he approaches God is not abstraction but concentration. He purifies his desires, schools his will, and fixes his whole attention upon God. God is not merely to be apprehended by a sustained effort of abstract thinking ; He is to be loved by a pure heart and obeyed by a disciplined will. So, when the moment of felt contact with God is over, his will and affections are still united to God. The moment of revelation may indeed be succeeded by hours of darkness and trouble, but he knows that in the clouds God is with him, provided his spiritual will retains its allegiance unimpaired.

CHAPTER XI

DIVINE PERSONALITY

UNION with God, then, may be experienced in this life as a feeling of His presence. If all the powers of our nature are duly trained and are concentrated upon Him, this feeling will be a feeling of love, a restful satisfaction of our being in Him in whose image we were created. Such a feeling of God can only be transitory and occasional ; but it has, and is meant to have, its result in the strengthening of the will and affections, whereby we are able in our daily life to walk more closely with Him.

Its final, perfect, and permanent form will be the Beatific Vision of the Holy Trinity in heaven.

But we shall best prepare ourselves for such moments of insight, if God in His mercy vouchsafes them to us, and shall be helped also in our prayers and meditations, if we consider in all reverence and humility what is revealed to us of the Nature of God Himself.

Our guides will be (*a*) a reverent spirit, conscious of its own ignorance and weakness ; (*b*) the teaching of the Bible and the Church ; (*c*) the analogy of

ourselves, made in God's likeness, and therefore certain to be a better reflection of His Nature than could be found anywhere else.

We will, then, be frankly anthropomorphic, studying the Divine as reflected in the human, and thus bringing our faith to the touch of personal experience. At the same time we shall test our speculations by the revealed word of God and the decisions of His Church.

Our own nature, then, from two distinct points of view, furnishes us with the conception of a Trinity in Unity.

First, from the psychological side our conscious life is seen to consist in reason, desire, and will. These are distinct modes in which life expresses itself; and they are ultimate modes. Their number cannot be diminished; we cannot reduce reason to a form of desire, or desire to a form of reason; and the will is present in both, and distinct from either. A child's reason is occupied with the alphabet: his desire is to be playing out-of-doors; the schism between the two is ended by the will siding with reason and conquering the rebel desire. And all the time there exists the unity of the child himself. Moreover, although each element is distinct from the others, not only are they all united in the unity of the self, but also the working of any one of them involves the working of the others. In our instance of the child learning his lesson, reason is obviously at work; but desire is also working: he would not learn at all unless there were a desire to learn, though it may be true that this desire is faint

and has to compete with rival desires. And, again it is through the operation of the will that this desire is strengthened and made effective, and the reason is enabled to complete its work.

And the same is the case where the gratification of any other desire is the primary interest. For, in the case of human beings, desire is attended by reason, which lifts it above the level of blind impulse and makes it a rational motive; also by the will, which fixes attention on it, and carries it into effect. Here, then, in our nature we observe three distinct capacities or modes of working, which, though distinct, are united in the unity of conscious life, and also reciprocally involve each other in their operations.

And alongside of this psychological trinity we find something similar in the sphere of metaphysical analysis. Every act of consciousness, whether it be in the way of reason or desire or volition, contains three factors: the Subject, the Object, and a Relation between the two. Thus in any act of reasoning, there is the Subject who thinks, the Object thought, and a Relation of the Thinker to the Thought in the shape of some judgment of approval or disapproval or doubt.

These three factors are implied in every conscious operation of the self. We can logically distinguish them, and in doing so may associate Identity especially with the Subject, Character especially with the Object, and Personality especially with the Relation; though we must remember that identity, character, and personality are inseparably com-

bined in the unity of the self, just as subject, object, and relation are unitedly present in every operation of the self.

Identity is the element of sameness which persists through and behind the change and variety of conscious life.

Character is the result of past operations of consciousness in the way of desire, thought, or volition. Personality is the attitude in which a man stands to his character—an attitude of self-knowledge, self-criticism, and introspection. It is his personality which makes a man capable of rights and duties in any society. He is capable of rights and duties because of the self-judgment which attends upon every manifestation of character—or, more exactly, he is capable of rights in so far as he can recognise duties; and his recognition of duty is rooted in the sense of obligation which self-criticism produces. Personality, then, which makes a man capable of earthly or heavenly citizenship, consists in the fact that he stands in a certain relation to his character, or the total accumulated result of his past activities—a relation of judgment and criticism, of acceptance or rejection : a relation which contains in itself the possibility of alteration or amendment, and which in the moral sphere manifests itself as conscience.

Do either of these analogies, the psychological or the metaphysical, help us to a better understanding of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity?

(a) To the former there is an obvious objection.

To take the sub-divisions of conscious life, reason, and desire and will, and to associate each of them

with one of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, involves insuperable difficulties. How is the allocation to be made? And assuming that reason is identified with the First Person, is there no reason in the Second Person, who is expressly called the Wisdom of God? And if desire is identified with the Son, is desire excluded from the Spirit, to whom the name of love is so constantly applied? And no re-arrangement or alteration will obviate the difficulty. It is urged in the strongest terms by S. Augustine against his own sub-division of the mind into memory, intelligence, and will.¹ Any such psychological analysis, then, is so far valuable for our purpose, as it teaches us that the one self contains a variety of elements, which work simultaneously and are yet distinct from each other. In this respect we gain a faint image of the nature of God. But the variety of ways in which the sub-division is made, and the impossibility of identifying any one of the divisions with any one Person of the Holy Trinity, form an insuperable limit to the usefulness of the analogy.

And (b) stated in its ultimate form this objection applies also to the metaphysical analysis into subject, object, and relation. The fact is that, in whatever way we draw distinctions, whether from the side of psychology or metaphysic, the analysis is necessarily an analysis of the life of a single person. Reason, desire, and will are the content of an individual consciousness. Subject, object, and relation are factors by whose interaction such a consciousness becomes self-conscious. In either

¹ "De Trinitate," xv. 7, 12.

case it is a single personality which is divided and explained. As applied to a single human personality such explanations are satisfactory, just because in such a case we can assume the existence of other personalities with which this composite self is in living communication. A is a single person, divisible into the elements which have been mentioned ; but then A is in contact and communication with B and C, who are other persons similarly constituted, and it is through his communion with B and C that his own personal life is moulded and developed. But if these distinct elements which make up one personal life are compared to the distinctions within the Godhead, we shall have to think of God also as one Person, with this difference—that in His case there would be no other Persons with whom He could hold communion. Such a conception would certainly not be Catholic, but rather of a Sabellian complexion. In the case of God we require not three factors making up one Personality, but Three Persons who are Themselves One God.

Here we may anticipate an objection. It will be said that the unity of God is after all the great truth which must be most jealously maintained, and that the analogies which have been mentioned, just because they give us an analysis of an individual life, are peculiarly valuable as illustrations of that truth. The distinction between Persons within the Godhead must not be unduly pressed. Moreover, it will be urged, the language of the Bible and the early Fathers does not mean the same thing as the language of modern philosophy, and it is a sheer

anachronism to identify them ; in particular, the Greek words, *ὑπόστασις* or *πρόσωπον*, translated "Person," do not carry with them the same idea of distinctness or separation as is involved in the more modern term. Now, it is perfectly true that the analysis of Personality is a modern conception, and also true that human Personality has often been conceived in an unduly separatist sense. But on the other hand, when the Bible and the Fathers speak of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, they undoubtedly wish to express the fact that there is a *conscious communication* between Them. For instance, the Logos-doctrine teaches that the Son not only is the plenitude of the Father's thought, but is conscious of this relation ("No man knoweth the Father but the Son"); and this consciousness is the essence of what is implied nowadays in the word Personality. And so we come back to our position, that any conception of the Divine Nature is inadequate which does not admit of conscious communion between the constituents of the Godhead; that neither the psychological nor the metaphysical analysis referred to does admit of such communion, and that neither of them is, therefore, so far, adequate.

Would it be better, then, to compare the relation between the Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity to that between distinct human persons? Certainly not. For, in the first place, we should thus be making the distinctions far too great; and, secondly, we should then be ignoring some of the clearest and most emphatic teaching of S. John and S.

Paul on the relation of the Eternal Son to the Father. The whole Logos-doctrine (whether that particular term be used or not) has its obvious affinities with the relation between subject and object, not with the relation between one person and another.

Let us return, then, to that analogy of human nature and see whether, though defective in itself as an image of the Divine Life, it may yet give us a clue to a more satisfactory and reverent theology.

In our own case, as we have just seen, subject, object, and relation are factors which together make up personality, and each one of which separately is impersonal. Let us, then, in thought raise each of them to a higher power, and regard each of them as endowed with distinct consciousness. Let us suppose that the object—that is, my system of knowledge, experience, and character—takes distinct shape and consciousness and confronts me face to face, as that which I am, the total expression of my actions and ideals. In that case, not only can I present it as an object to myself, regarding it as the issue and output of my being; but it again can present me as an object to itself, regarding me as the source from which it has flowed, as the element of identity in all its manifold diversity, as the point of connection which links up my moral with my intellectual activity. And let us suppose, further, that my relation to it, a relation of parentage, of familiarity with it and responsibility for it, together with all the mingled feelings of delight in my own workmanship, hatred of the flaws and

blunders in the work, despair at its inadequacy as an expression of the deepest reality of myself—mixed sentiments of pride, loathing, and contempt—let us suppose that this comprehensive relation between me and myself also becomes a person. Let us think of it as comparing, reconciling, judging ; uniting me and my character, proceeding from both, because the bond of union between the two ; searching out the deep things of my nature ; showing me how my character is the rational and necessary outcome of my life, the crystallisation of desires and the output of my will ; and, again, showing my character how I am the element of sameness in all its manifestations, the fountain-head from which it has flowed down its various channels.

In such a conception, which is not so wild as it might appear, in view of what psychology tells us of divided personality and dual consciousness, the distinction of subject, object, and relation is retained, but each is raised to a higher rank. May not this conception help us to a profitable and reverent mode of thinking about God ?

Each member of the Holy Trinity is personal. Each Person must have the distinctness of being which personality implies : that is, the Father must not be related to the Son and to the Holy Spirit in such a way as to make up One Personality of God (in which case the Son and the Spirit would not be personal at all) ; but the Father, the Son, and the Spirit must each be a conscious Person, making up the One Nature of the most High God. The Father contemplates the Son as His Word, the expression

of His thoughts and will, the brightness of His Glory, and the exact image of His Person. To us the contemplation of truth means a laborious process by which we gather up and survey our piecemeal acquisitions of knowledge in many different spheres. But to God truth of every sort is eternally and simultaneously present. He contemplates it in its unity and perfection ; and contemplates it not merely as Truth but as Life—the Life of the Beloved Son in whom the Father is well pleased. And the Son, as a Person, contemplates the Father as the Fount of His own Being, the Source from which come the thoughts and desires which make up the content of His Life ; contemplates Him with the unswerving loyalty and the free self-surrender of Filial Love. And the Holy Ghost, as a Person, contemplates the Father in the Son and the Son in the Father ; He searches the deep things of God ; is the bond of the union between the Father and the Son ; as the Son is the Word of the Father, so the Spirit is the *utterance* of that word, an utterance which proceeds from the Father through the Son and forms a common sphere for their mutual indwelling. And as the Father and the Son are united in absolute harmony, as the Son is the flawless expression of the Father's will, it follows that the relation between self and character, which in the case of us sinners is, in the moral sphere, called by the name of conscience, is in the Divine Life a relation of perfect Love. In us the conscience reproaches the character with being unworthy of the self ; the Holy Spirit loves the Son as the perfect fulfilment

(πλήρωμα) of the Father, and the Father as gloriously self-revealed in the Person of the Son.

And it may be added that, as we associate human *personality* especially with the relation between subject and object (the self and the character), so when we are speaking of a *Personal God*, without explicit reference to distinctions within the Godhead, we shall be thinking primarily of the Holy Spirit who is the Living Relation between the Father and the Son. So, too, when we speak of the *Sameness* of God who changes not throughout the ages, we shall be thinking primarily of the Father, whom we associate with the identity of the subject in every act of thought or desire; and when we speak of the *Character*, or self-Revelation, of God, we shall be thinking primarily of the Son, who eternally manifests the Father's will. And the Identity of the Subject, the Character of the Object, and the Personality of the Relation, together are the Life of the indivisible Triune God; the special characteristics of each being shared in perfect inter-communion by the others. And if it is still thought that the existence of distinct Personalities within the Holy Trinity, thus understood, brings with it the danger of tritheism, it is worth while to remind ourselves that even in our own case personality is not meant to be a hard barrier of severance and antagonism between man and man. With us, indeed, it has come to be some such thing in consequence of sin, which consists in self-love and works by self-assertion, and which has hardened the fluid boundaries of personality into a fortress-

wall. Ideally the uniting bond of a common nature should be a great deal more effective amongst us, and the separateness of man from man much less keenly emphasised.

The perfect relation between persons is a distinctness which melts away through soft gradations, and never becomes separation. Of such a sort may we conceive to be the union between the Divine Persons of the Undivided Trinity.

Lastly, we must notice the objection that, if God is personal, He cannot also be "the Absolute." The meaning is, that personal life, with its distinction of subject and object, involves an attitude of "otherness" to a world which is contemplated, and which, by the fact of being contemplated, is distinguished from him who contemplates it. Thus a personal God cannot be identified with the world—which is the apparent privilege of the Absolute. In this sense we may readily and gratefully acknowledge that God is not Absolute.

If He were, He would be revealed equally and indifferently in any and every event and in any and every character.

As personal, God expresses Himself in His Son, who is truth and goodness in their ideal perfection, who is distinct from the Father as the object is distinct from the subject, but is united to Him as the full and complete expression of His Being. Here the distinction of subject and object is a distinction which lies entirely within the unity of the Godhead. The Father is aware of the Son, not as of an alien and separate non-self, lying outside His

own nature and limiting it, but as of One in whom His own Being is completely and exclusively mirrored.

The identification of the Absolute with the world means, in one word, Pantheism. God, as Personal, transcends the world, and is not to be identified with it ; though, as we shall see in the next chapter, the world has its ideal in God, and can grow to perfection by gradual approximation to that ideal.

Moreover, each human personality which God creates, exists with a life of its own distinct from that of God. In making us free personal creatures He deliberately limits His direct control over us, and sends us out into the world to refuse the evil and choose the good for ourselves ; by giving us power of choice, He has imparted to us a measure of creative power. "All the whole heavens are the Lord's ; the earth hath He given to the children of men." This only means that He who is boundless in power has freely and lovingly limited the exercise of that power, in order that we may be free ; and He gives us a nature distinct from Himself though entirely dependent upon Him, that we may feel after Him and find Him, and find ourselves through union with Him.

The God, then, whom we contemplate, and with whom we may experience the joy of union, is not a Being utterly unlike ourselves, an unknown, an alien hypothesis, an abstract unity ; but a Personal Life, a God whose thought is the Eternal Generation of the Son, and whose Love is the Procession of the Holy Ghost. Such a God contains in Himself the

fulness of everything that we are or desire to be ; He is like us, because we are His offspring and His image. By placing ourselves humbly and lovingly in His presence we may gain the power of unlimited growth of knowledge and love.

CHAPTER XII

THE ETERNAL WORD

IN the last chapter we were thinking of God the Son in His relation to the Father. This relation may be summed up by saying that He is the complete expression of the Father's Being ; or, in language made familiar to us by Scripture, that He is the Word of God, co-eternal and co-divine with the Father, the effulgence of His glory, and the counterpart or impression of His Person ; the image of the invisible God, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells ; the beloved Son, in whom the Father is well pleased, and whom the Father loved before the foundation of the world.

And, flowing from this, there is another truth about the Divine Son which we must now go on to consider, namely, His relation to the universe. In dealing with this we shall dwell especially on the passages in which this relation is stated or adumbrated in the Bible. But it is well to admit at the outset that these passages are neither very numerous nor very explicit. Indeed, we should not expect it to be otherwise. The Bible is mainly concerned

with the record of God's dealings with man. God the Son is presented to us principally in His Redemptive work. Now, redemption necessarily and directly involves His relation to the Father and to humanity, but only indirectly, or less obviously, His relation to the universe. All the writers of the New Testament describe Christ as the Redeemer; only a few of the more philosophically minded indicate the fact that He fulfils a cosmic function as well, and that this cosmic function is implied as the background of His work of Redemption, and also as an outcome of that work.

The cosmic significance of Christ, that is, His relation to the universe as a whole, may be expressed under three heads: (a) He is the archetypal life of the universe, and its Maker; (b) He is the unifying and sustaining power of the universe; (c) He is also the goal at which it aims.

In dealing with each of these heads, we will first consider the texts on which the truths just mentioned rest, and then try to state them in more general and modern terms.

(1) First, then, that Christ is the archetypal life of the universe is stated in S. John i. 4, if the almost certainly correct punctuation is adopted. "That which was made was life in Him, and the life was the light of men" (ὃ γέγονεν, ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, &c.).¹ That this is the right punctuation is,

¹ The alternatives are (1) "Without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life," &c., as in the A.V. (2) "Without Him was not anything made. That which was made was life in Him," as in the margin of the R.V.

we think, proved by the wide acceptance it received from the earliest times in spite of the *prima facie* difficulty of the statement involved. The whole universe, it tells us, pre-existed ideally in the life of the Son. And of similar import is the expression of S. Paul, that the Son is *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως*, *ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα*.¹

The words are translated in the A.V., "the firstborn of every creature: for by Him were all things created"; in the R.V., "the firstborn of all creation; for in Him were all things created." The latter is certainly an improvement, especially in the substitution of "in Him" for the erroneous "by Him" of the A.V. "Firstborn of all creation" remains an ambiguous expression. The word translated *firstborn* probably has rather the meaning of *born before*, *born before all creation* being much the same as the "begotten of His Father before all worlds" of the Nicene Creed.² In any case the expression is obviously intended to be explained in the words which follow: "Because in Him all things were created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible," &c. The universe was created in Him as its pre-existent source, its pattern, archetype, or ideal perfection. In the light of this statement

Westcott remarks *ad loc.*, "It would be difficult to find a more complete consent of ancient authorities in favour of any reading than that which supports the second punctuation."

¹ Col. i. 15-16.

² "Est genitus; et genitus ante creationem rerum omnium. τὸ προ, quod continetur in πρωτότοκος, regit genitivum κτίσεως" (Bengel).

πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως, whether translated *first-born* or *born before*, will have very much the force of archetype; the Son is begotten of the same Father who created the world, and is begotten before the world; the meaning and purpose of the universe pre-exists in Him.

And the gist of the passage will be that the Son, being the image of the invisible God, becomes in His turn the archetype of creation. As He is the image of the Father, so the universe is the image of Him.¹

Thus His cosmic relation to the universe will be strictly analogous to His historical relation to humanity, as expressed in the words, "As My Father hath loved Me, so I have loved you"; or, "As My Father has sent Me, even so send I you." This analogy, indeed, is unmistakably suggested in this passage of Colossians i. First the cosmic significance of Christ's Person is given. "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him and unto Him; and He is

¹ So Dr. Drummond, in commenting on Philo, says, "In its filial or objective relation the Logos is the 'image' of God, and the archetype of the cosmos and of man." He quotes Philo as saying (*de Specialibus Legibus*, iii. 15), that man is "an all-beautiful impression of an all-beautiful image, stamped with the pattern of an archetypal rational idea" (παγκάλης εικόνας πάγκαλον ἐκμαγεῖον, ἀρχετύπου λογικῆς ιδέας παραδείγματι τυπωθῆναι).

before all things, and in Him all things consist." Then follows His historical position in the economy of Redemption : "And He is the head of the body, the Church : who is the beginning, the first-born of the dead." Then the two lines of truth, the cosmic and the historical, are drawn together : "that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. For it was the good pleasure (of the Father) that in Him should all fulness dwell, and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, having made peace through the blood of His Cross ; through Him (I say), whether things upon the earth or things in the heavens."

The Eternal Word is the complete expression of the Father's mind, the organic embodiment of all truth in its flawless perfection. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Perfect knowledge is the act whereby God contemplates all truth in the Person of His Son. This is an eternal act, being part of what is meant by the Eternal Generation of the Son. The universe and all that is in it, together with the laws and purposes that govern it, existed in idea from all eternity in the Word. Creation was the externalising of eternal types, the manifestation of eternal power and Godhead in the things that are made.¹ Our universe of truth, with all that it means or may come to mean in the development of knowledge throughout the ages, existed paradeigmatically in the life of the Son. Considered in this light it might be described with Plato as "one eternal only-begotten

¹ Romans i. 20.

universe";¹ provided that we bear in mind Dante's warning that the Word of God, in His eternal and changeless perfection, must far transcend the limits of our world. "He who rolled the compass round the limit of the world, and within it marked out so much both hidden and revealed, could not so stamp His worth on all the universe but that His Word remained in infinite excess."² Thus, then, the plenitude of the Father's thought, which exists perfectly and eternally in Christ, is also the goal and ideal of human knowledge. Christ's eternal Life is not only the expression of the Father's Being, but also the perfection of all the lines of truth which men pursue, or rather, because His Life is the express image of the Father, therefore it must contain all the ideals at which men, made in God's image, are ever aiming. Christ has a mediatorial function in the sphere of knowledge; through Him and the light which comes from Him man can enter into possession of the truth as it is in God; in Him exist all the types or patterns or forms which are represented in human knowledge, and it is through Him, as the light which lighteneth every man, that they come to be known.

¹ *Timæus*, 31 b. Εἰς ὅδε μονογενὴς οὐρανὸς γεγονώς ἔστι τε καὶ ἔτ' ἔσται.

² Colui che volse il sesto

All'estremo del mondo, et dentro ad esso
 Distinse tanto occulto e manifesto,
 Non potè suo valor sì far impresso
 In tutto l'universo, che il suo Verbo
 Non rimanesse in infinito eccesso (Par. xix. 40-5).

The conception is admirably expressed by Rusbrock. "The Father," he says, "contemplates Himself fully and perfectly in the abyss of His fertility, and by the very act of understanding Himself begets another Person, the Son, His eternal Word. The type of all creation, which had not yet emerged from nothingness, dwelt eternally in the Eternal Son. God saw and contemplated them in their type, but within Himself. For there is nothing in God that is not God. This eternal life which our types possess, apart from us, in God is the formal cause of our existence. The Wisdom of God is the effulgence of the Father and the eternal type of all beings, on which creatures were planned at the day of their creation. God sees Himself, and sees everything, in His word as in a mirror. The Trinity has created us in His image according to the eternal pattern of ourselves which He had in His bosom before the world was."¹ "That which was made was life in Him, *and the life was the light of men.*" The Life of the Word is, then, the archetypal perfection of the universe; but it is also the light by which that universe becomes known to men. The Divine Life is the cause both of its existing and of its being known. Human knowledge is just one form in which the Divine Life manifests itself. In acquiring knowledge, as in attaining goodness, man is gradually appropriating an ideal which is eternally realised in the Word of God.

There are two points here that deserve notice.

¹ Hello, pp. 67-68.

(a) Knowledge is a form of life. This is an unfamiliar conception, but a very fruitful one. It is unfamiliar because ordinarily we separate science by a sharp line of cleavage from ethics and other branches of human endeavour ; and it is a fruitful one, because it reminds us (as we continually need to be reminded) of the essential underlying unity of human nature. Knowledge and morality are co-ordinate forms of life, kindred types of aspiration ; as such they interact and affect each other. The higher forms of knowledge are a sealed book to a heart that is waxed gross through sin ; and on the other hand he that will do God's will can judge the truth of religious teaching. Progress, alike in knowledge and morals, is our gradual assimilation of a Life which, in its eternal perfection, is the Wisdom and Power of God. Knowledge is Life, the Life of the Word in us. Perfect knowledge would be possessed by the completely spiritual man in whom the Life of the Word reigns supreme, completely illuminating every part of his nature.

(b) The light which gives us knowledge is a light communicated to created intelligences, which work freely and responsibly in constructing their edifice of truth. Truth is not communicated ready-made and passively received, but is put together by us through the light that is given us. In just the same way we become morally good, not by receiving passively the light of God's grace, but by co-operating with it and casting away the work of darkness. As, then, we may fail in the moral life by rejecting or

misusing God's grace, so in the sphere of knowledge we may fail to progress in consequence of intellectual conceit, prejudice, or impatience, by which our efforts after truth are marred. But this point belongs rather to our third heading.

(ii.) *The Eternal Word is the sustaining and unifying power of the universe.*

"His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power (φέρων τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ), when He had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high."¹ Here, again, the Son's relation to the universe is clearly connected with His relation to the Father; because He is the Son, therefore He becomes the heir of the universe and has the power to uphold it. And here, again, His cosmic and redemptive functions are placed side by side; He who eternally upholds the universe is the same Christ who once made purification of sins.

And, further, returning to Colossians, we are told that "in Him all things consist" (τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν).² The Son is the point of unity, the unifying principle of the universe. All the diversity, all the manifoldness of the world, are so many rays proceeding from a single point of light, so many streams flowing in different directions from one watershed. In an age of extreme specialisation it is important to remember this. The universe of

¹ Heb. i. 2-3.

² Col. i. 17

truth is one; its material and spiritual aspects, its physical science, its ethics and æsthetics all flow out from the fulness of the Word, in whom truth, beauty, and goodness meet and are reconciled. "In Him all things consist," or cohere, or hold together. Moreover, as the Eternal Word unifies our ideals, so, too, He guarantees their permanent reality; He upholds them by the word of His power. In Him we gain the confident assurance of things hoped for. The truth, of whatever sort, after which we are struggling is not a will-o'-the-wisp, which lures us to its pursuit and then goes out, but is eternally upheld by Him in whom it consists; through our union with Him we shall find it a possession for ever.

These points have been dealt with already in the chapter on contemplation, and need only be alluded to here. They had to be just mentioned because they express an important relation of the Word to the universe of truth. The "assurance," which in the earlier chapter we ascribed simply to faith in God, is now seen more exactly to be rooted in the eternal Word.

(iii.) *The Word is the goal of the universe.*

"Unto Him all things were created" ¹ (εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα ἐκτίσθη). It is the secret purpose of God to *sum up* all things in Christ—the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth,² &c. (ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ χριστῷ; or, again, "through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself" ³ (δι' αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν). In the Son all

¹ Col. i. 16.

² Ephes. i. 10.

³ Col. i. 20.

things are to be gathered up ; to Him, as their centre, they are to return ; in Him they are to find their consummation and perfection. These expressions imply that the universe has left the line of its true development ; its unity has to be re-discovered ; the return is a process of redemption ; the " summing up " is a " reconciliation " ; the goal has to be painfully and eagerly sought.

" The earnest expectation of creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it, in hope that creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only so, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for (our) adoption, the redemption of our body." ¹

Creation has fallen with the fall of man, and can only be restored in his restoration, emancipated in his deliverance.

We have seen, under our first heading in this chapter, that (a) the plenitude of truth exists eternally in the Divine Son as the Word of God, and that this truth is the ideal perfection to which we approximate in our own efforts after knowledge ; and (b) we do not passively and automatically receive this truth from God, but construct it for ourselves by our free use of the light of reason

¹ Romans viii. 19-23.

divinely given to us. This principle, that truth is a rational construction, built up by men out of the chaos of facts which are borne along on the stream of consciousness, is familiar to all students of philosophy.

It is now being attractively restated under the name of Pragmatism,¹ which tells us that both the object of the construction and the test of its validity is the satisfaction of human needs in the way of knowledge, goodness, or beauty. Truth is the answer which man gets to the questionings of various parts of his nature. Ultimately that is true which satisfies the various postulates made by man not as mere intelligence, but as a concrete unity of intellect, will, and desire. It follows that the world is our world, not only because we live in it, but also because we have constructed it. It is our workmanship, the expression of our values and ideals. And if anything goes wrong with the brain or hand of the workman the work will inevitably be marred. If the end or purpose of our life and actions has been distorted, then the world that has been constructed to subserve it and give effect to it will be equally awry. If we make the wrong claims, we shall get unsatisfying results; if the needs that actuate us in our inquiry are grovelling and selfish,

¹ The merit of Pragmatism, in my eyes, is its insistence on the complexity of human nature, and the part played by the will and the desires, alongside of the intellect, in this acquisition of knowledge. Apart from this, it does not seem to differ as much as it thinks it does from the old-fashioned idealism which it attacks so unmercifully.

the universe will necessarily assume a materialistic and porcine aspect. And this is just what has happened.

Greed and self-will and impatience gave a wrong turn to men's pursuit of truth. The light has been dimmed and blurred by self-assertion. Instead of trying to read God's thoughts after Him, we have made ourselves, our passions and prejudices the standard of truth ; and our sin is stamped upon our universe. It has come to be out of harmony with the truth of things as it exists in the Eternal Word, and must be redeemed in and through the redemption of man. Thus the goal of the universe, as of man, is a return to that truth which is the life of the Word. Regenerate science is the discovery of true relationships in the universe, or the construction of an universe which shall satisfy the real nature of man. And we must insist that the return of the universe to God is not a mere metaphorical expression for the return of the effect to the cause, as described in the Fourth Book of Erigena's great work ; it is a moral return, the return of a prodigal to his father. Man had led the universe astray by sin, he must bring it back to God by penitence.

This rehabilitation of creation consists (*a*) in the recognition of its divine character as a system of God's thoughts, however much distorted and misread in the past by human self-assertion. The opposition which has been imagined between Nature and God, natural law and an absentee creator, is itself an outcome of man's sin, whereby

he had tried to forget God in the selfish enjoyment of God's gifts. This banishment of Nature from God, of the thought from the thinker, may be taken as part of what is meant by the assertion that "creation groans and travails in pain together." It must be abolished. Nature must be brought back to God ; natural law be recognised as the orderly expression of God's thought, and creation used in conformity with God's supreme principle of love. Hence will follow such results as reverence in the contemplation of truth, patience and humility in its pursuit ; the abolition of suffering ; respect for the animal creation ; a sense of universal sympathy and kinship, which was felt by Plotinus as the "magic of the universe," and was exemplified in the character and actions of S. Francis.

(b) Creation, thus reconciled to God, will be recognised as capable of an infinite development. Fresh revelations of God are forthcoming without end or limit, and the new truth can be added to the old without discrepancy. The "natural" can grow upwards and outwards into the "spiritual," because it is understood at last that the natural is itself inherently and essentially spiritual. The universe of our experience is unbounded in either height or breadth, since it is our representation of God's truth as it lives eternally in the Person of the Son. It is to grow upwards in our keener spiritual perceptions, flowing from a freer and fuller spiritual life ; and it is to grow outwards in our recognition of subtler affinities, binding all things together by cords of sympathy and fellowship.

In this way man's creation of the universe in his science and experience can gradually and progressively reproduce the lineaments of the perfect truth as it is in Christ. Science is no mere dualistic speculation concerning some heterogeneous subject matter ; rather it is a process of assimilating the divine life by personal union with the Word. There will be no more room for disquieting questions as to the relation between knowledge and reality. Knowledge is real, not because it is a reflection of alien outside objects, but because it is the life of God in us.

We progress in knowledge in proportion as with humility and self-effacement we enter more fully into the life of the Eternal Word ; and the goal of all knowledge is the Beatific Vision of Truth in its perfection and unity in the Living Person of our Lord. We contemplate His life *per speculum in ænigmate* in our present system of knowledge, then face to face in His unveiled presence.

The Holy Spirit, who sanctifies the individual by bringing him into union with Christ, has an analogous function in the sphere of human knowledge. He dwells in our universe, not with the result of identifying it with God, as Pantheism falsely boasts, but with the object of reconciling it to God, bringing it into harmony with the transcendent ideal which lives in the Eternal Word.

Thus the doctrine of the Holy Trinity has important implications in the realm of truth. The Father is the one Supreme Source of Truth ; in the Son, truth exists coherent, organised, com-

plete, as the self-existent system of the Father's thoughts.

The Holy Spirit broods on the souls of men, bringing their system of knowledge nearer and nearer to that perfect ideal, which is the Living Word and Wisdom of the Father.

CHAPTER XIII

"ALL THINGS ARE YOURS"

WE have studied the successive steps of the soul's ascent to God. We have thought of the Divine Nature as a concrete unity in which truth, beauty, and goodness meet. We have been led by the Logos-doctrine to consider the Son as the perfect embodiment of these qualities, and as therefore being (*a*) the perfect expression of the Father's thought; and (*b*) the pre-existent archetype of human knowledge, the guarantee of its validity, and the pledge of its unlimited extension.

With these convictions in our minds, we can come back to the world, from which we saw that we must first separate ourselves in order to rise to God, the one and only satisfaction of a being made in His image. We come back to the world, not in order to allow it to become once more (what it was before) a substitute for God, but in order to gather it up into that life of God in which we have learnt to live. In God we have found the glory of a liberty which consists in our sonship to Him; and now the rest of creation, alienated from Him through our apostasy, is to be reconciled to Him

with ourselves in Christ. Already in the last chapter we have seen that this reconciliation consists, in general, in the recognition of a spiritual character in creation, as being the manifestation to us of the perfect truth as it exists eternally in Christ. This invisible perfection is manifested in the things that are made. The world, then, to which we come back, after climbing the holy mountain, is a world conceived as definitely and inherently spiritual in its origin and meaning, a world in which the distinction between sacred and secular is abolished, through the abolition, root and branch, of anything that is distinctly secular. By *secular* I understand anything that is considered as existing apart from God ; anything which is invested with a worth or dignity of its own independently of God, and to which God and God's approval can subsequently be added in order to increase its worth and enhance its dignity. Secular means *independent of God*. The man of secular aims is the man who seeks his satisfaction in things as they are in themselves apart from God. He may, or may not, introduce God as subsequently to give a decorative and ceremonial sanction to his life ; but his main interest lies in the world, not in God. Our contention has been that this secular life is self-condemned as a failure. No one has ever got what he wanted in this world, except the Saints, who have been in the world but not of it, and who found a solid, permanent, adequate satisfaction just because they sought it not in the world but in God. In Christ, as the perfect expression of the Father's thought, exist all the trea-

asures of wisdom and knowledge ; in Him "all things are ours" ; he that has the Son has *life* ; has, that is, not a mere existence torn asunder by the furies of desire, but an eternal life centred upon an eternal object, an eternal life which sees and possesses all things in the Eternal Word, wherein they are invested with stability, unity, and perfection. The possession of this eternal life transfigures and spiritualises the world to which we return ; it puts us in a new relation to its three main aspects—beauty, truth, and goodness.

(a) In ordinary life the forms of natural beauty which impress us most depend upon a combination of propitious elements, which cannot last long. When it breaks up, the impression ceases. A good sunset in the Alps will do as an example—when there is just the right amount of cloud, and the snow fields are properly placed to catch the evening glow. It is very exquisite while it lasts ; but in a moment the sun has sunk, the glory swims away, we are afraid of catching cold, and hurry back to our hotel with its *table d'hôte* and gossip. If we are of an impressionable temperament, the splendour may fill us at the moment with a vague feeling of solemnity, as by the presence of something unearthly. And if we are imaginative, we may be able from time to time to recall a more or less vivid idea of the impression, as Wordsworth was able to conjure up before his mind the picture of the dancing daffodils. But in any case the impression or idea is transient and fragmentary. On the other hand, to a man who has trained himself in spiritual ways,

this transient gleam connects itself at once with the eternal and uncreated Beauty ; it gains its proper context there, and in that context receives stability and permanence. The loveliness of the sunset raises the mind at once to the unfading glory of all things in Christ—a glory in which it is itself incorporated as a permanent factor. And not only does a passing gleam of beauty thus become a possession for ever to the spiritual perception, it also expands ; that is, it becomes symbolical of other things with which it is connected in its spiritual context. The sunset colours bring before the soul the harmonious blending of truth in perfect knowledge and the pure radiance of perfect love. In the vast panorama of the spiritual world, to which it belongs, the sunset itself may well be merged and half forgotten ; not forgotten through the stress of “ natural ” interests which crowd it out from a secular mind, but forgotten in face of a glory which excelleth, a spiritual glory which gave it its brightness and far transcends its beauty. We are told of a saint who walked all day along the Lake of Geneva, and, wrapped in contemplation, was hardly aware of its existence. We are inclined to dub him a Philistine. But perhaps the beauty of his surroundings had at once lifted his spirit to heavenly places, to a spiritual vision of the crystal sea before the Throne, and the unceasing adoration paid alike by Nature and the Church to Him that sat thereon : *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty. Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.* So, even if the saint’s eyes no longer rested on the

Lake, perhaps he was really as well off as the conscientious sightseer who "points and nods and hurries by" with his Baedeker in one hand and his field-glass in the other. When the whole scheme of Perfection has opened before his eyes, he need not pay such rapt attention to the detail which first called the vision up. When a man has become a millionaire, he may sometimes cease to consider the sixpence with which he first faced the world.

It is profoundly true that the spiritual man, who has detached himself from the world and turned to God, also gets far more solid joy out of the world than the worldly man does. The worldly man spends himself in the pursuit of what is essentially transient and unsatisfying, and experiences disgust and disappointment in consequence. To the spiritual man they cease to be transient, and become permanent treasures in the Kingdom of Heaven, of which he is a citizen. "The glory of man is as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever." ¹ And it is in the Word of God that the glory and beauty of things possess their enduring spiritual significance. A man "has greater joy and comfort in the creatures if he detaches himself from them, and he can have no joy in them if he considers them as his own. He acquires also in this detachment from creatures a clear comprehension of them, so as to understand perfectly the truths that relate to them, both naturally and supernaturally. For this reason his joy in them is widely

¹ 1 Peter i. 24-25.

different from his who is attached to them, and far nobler. The former rejoices in their truth, the latter in their deceptiveness; the former in their best, and the latter in their worst conditions; the former in their substantial worth, and the latter in their seeming and accidental nature, through his senses only. . . . The former has joy in all things, but his joy is not dependent upon them, neither does it arise from their being his own; and the latter, so far as he regards them as his own, loses in general all joy whatever. The former, while his heart is set upon none of them, possesses them all. The latter, while in will attached to them, neither has nor possesses anything; yea, rather, created things have possession of his very heart, for which cause he suffers pain as a prisoner." ¹

Thus the mystic's joy in the world is incomparably greater than that of the worldly man, just because the things of the world are, for him, taken up into a larger whole and exhibited in their true spiritual significance. Instead of being pursued for themselves, and yielding nothing but disgust—"Before, a joy proposed; behind, a very woe"—they are so many suggestions, raising the soul to solid, abiding satisfaction.

And what has been said, though applied in the first instance to the pleasure arising from natural beauty, holds good also of the pleasure a man takes in any of his possessions. Of themselves they can never satisfy him. If he sets the desire of his soul upon them he can never have enough, because his

¹ "Ascent of Mount Carmel," pp. 298-9.

soul is an infinity which only God can fill. Money, houses, luxuries, friendships, fame, can be thrown into that emptiness and leave it empty still. But when once the soul has been turned from these things to God, then any small thing that he owns is again a suggestion to him of the truth that in God he possesses all things, as well as a reminder of God's absolute ownership of himself and them, and his own responsibility for his use of both.

(b) And as it is with beauty, so it is with knowledge. The spiritual man is equipped with two great advantages for the pursuit of truth : (1) assurance of success, (2) largeness of outlook.

(1) He has a confident belief in the reality of truth, and an assurance that in its substance he possesses it already, because he is in touch with its living centre. Truth is a person whom he loves and knows. Progress in knowledge is the filling in of an outline which is clearly traced ; ultimately it is the seeing face to face that Word of God with whom he is already in communion. In Tennyson's Poem the pessimistic voice counsels despair of the attainment of truth.

"Thou hast not scaled a real height,
Nor art thou nearer to the light,
Because the scale is infinite."

And this objection holds with fatal force against any secular or dualistic conception of the universe. For in this case there are two factors alien to each other, between which a great gulf lies. On the one

hand there is the "mind that muses on many things,"¹ weighed down by the earthly tabernacle of a corruptible body, and urged by curiosity to a short-lived investigation of outside things. On the other hand there is the outside world stretched out before her, plain beyond plain, and rising above her, peak beyond peak.

The corruptible body will have put an end to the musings of the mind long before anything real has been attained—before the main secret has been disclosed.

At every step of the ascent the landscape changes. New objects and new groupings of objects come into view, as in a kaleidoscope that is shaken; things start into fresh relationships with each other, and all the time the real ascent has hardly begun.

But the spiritual man is already at the summit. His ascent to God has placed him on the supreme peak of the mountain of knowledge. To him the unity of truth is an experienced fact, not a baffling and unattainable ideal; the various departments of knowledge group themselves coherently round a spiritual centre. "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible; all things were created by Him and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."²

Being, then, at the centre of truth, the spiritual man can work humbly and confidently at its details—humbly, because truth is a sacred thing, a manifesta-

¹ Wisdom ix.

² Col. i. 16-17.

tion of God's glory ; confidently, because the master key that opens every lock is already in his hands.

Knowledge to him is not knowledge of an *outside* world, which would remain a stranger and an alien to him even if he knew all the facts which make up its nature. He is not like the Stoic whose ideal, described by Dr. Bussell, is "to sit, a disembodied spirit, upon the outer circle of the universe, and understand the secrets of Nature's laboratory."¹

The Christian mystic's relation to truth is an *inside* relation. He stands in a position of loving union with the Word of God, "in whom all things consist." The Word dwells within him. In him the acquisition of knowledge is true "education," the drawing out of what is implicit within, and the fact that the well-spring of all truth is within him makes it a personal possession, and gives him confidence that it is really his own, to draw upon without stint or hesitation.

The properly instructed scribe is a householder bringing out of his treasure things new and old.

(2) The second advantage which the spiritually minded man possesses in the sphere of knowledge is his *largeness of outlook*. Having a living sense of the unity of truth, he feels the interconnectedness of different kinds of truth. If he is working at some minute subdivision of natural science, his special subject at once receives its setting in the spiritual unity of truth, and thereby at once becomes symbolical of other forms of truth—artistic truth and moral truth. Thus, not only does a dull and

¹ "The School of Plato," p. 242.

commonplace study become transfigured by a new assurance of its value and validity, but also the student's mind is kept sweet and fresh, and receptive of other influences. He is saved from the atrophy by which, in other men, all faculties which are not immediately employed in their particular study become stunted and withered for lack of exercise. His study of his special subject will be all the more successful because sustained by an enthusiasm, a sort of philosophic Eros, which makes it an act of homage to a personal source of all Truth. The Christian mystic, then, will not necessarily be a dreamy ignoramus. He will pursue knowledge like other people, and in his pursuit he will be sustained by a buoyant confidence and a comprehensiveness of interests which are invaluable pledges of success.

"Benedicite, omnia opera" will be his motto; his work will be a work of praise, of thanksgiving to God for His great glory manifested in all Creation.

(c) Lastly, let us watch the spiritually minded man in the practical life of moral virtue and beneficence.

If we are on the look-out for eccentricities, we shall be disappointed. He has no special idiosyncrasies or mannerisms, does not isolate himself from other people, but goes about his business and does his duty in much the same way as any ordinary good Christian man. There are, however, just two characteristics which come into view as we look at him more closely; neither of them are at all striking, and they might easily escape the notice

of casual observers. In the first place he seems anxious, of set purpose, to make his life quiet, unobtrusive, and commonplace. He does not seem to be consumed with a zeal for testifying; he probably belongs to few societies, and does not press forward as the spokesman of a cause or as a champion of righteousness; he does not appear to cast about for opportunities of usefulness, nay, he seems sometimes to neglect them when they stare him in the face. We should describe him as a rather disappointing person, good and respectable, no doubt, but very much lacking in dash and enthusiasm.

But if we could penetrate beneath the surface we should discover an underlying principle. He is a man who believes intensely in prayer as the strongest and most beneficent power in the universe, and in some form or other his life is largely made up of prayer. He is deeply impressed with the amount of harm done by good people, with the extent to which beneficent activity is ruined by self-assertion, with the futility of zeal unaccompanied by charity and humility, with the impossibility of exerting a spiritual influence without leading a spiritual life. On the other hand, he feels that if he prays for people he must do them good and cannot do them harm, and that, if he lives himself in communion with God, he will help his neighbour more thereby than by much exhortation and instruction and reproof. If people ask his advice, he will spare no time or trouble in trying to help them. If he sees some one who needs assistance, he will

grudge no sacrifice to render it. As Rusbrock quaintly puts it, "If you are carried as high in ecstasy as St. Peter and St. Paul, and learn that a sick man requires some hot broth, I advise you to wake up for a moment from ecstasy and heat up the broth."¹ If his calling is that of a "pastor and teacher," he will be careful to make his own spiritual experience the basis of all his utterances, in order that he may know what he talks about, and may talk only of what he knows.

He hopes that if Christ really dwells within him, Christ will shine out through him and guide men's feet into the way of peace ; that if he has honestly offered his life to Christ, Christ will show him what to do or say, or, rather, will Himself say and do what is right by means of His servant's lips and hands. Thus there will be nothing showy about his life ; the world will not ring with his achievements ; he will not be widely known ; it will be enough if, through contact with his character, the characters of others are strengthened, deepened, and purified.

(b) Secondly, besides being quiet and reticent, he strikes the careful observer as extraordinarily happy. There is nothing grudging or reluctant or half-hearted about his morality. Goodness, in his eyes is not a grumbling sacrifice to the proprieties, but *Christ dwelling in him*. And as the Christ who thus dwells in him is also the Eternal Word, the archetype of truth, the moral life is, to him, the true or rational life, the life in accordance with the reason

¹ Hello, p. 121

of things, the life which conforms to the supreme and eternal law of love. In being moral he feels that he is not being stupid or boorish, but is in harmony with the ultimate truth of things, the supreme intelligence of the universe.

Again, since the Eternal Word is not only the treasure-house of wisdom but also of beauty and glory, it follows that this morality, inspired by the indwelling Word, is an intrinsically beautiful thing, not something to be apologised for, but something prized as noble and glorious in itself and inherently attractive to others ; something that brings gladness and serene happiness to its possessor.

Thus the morality of the spiritually minded man is linked with truth and beauty. It is a precious possession, not gained by his own effort, but the gift of the indwelling Spirit of Christ. He will be tempted, certainly, to give it up ; but he knows that if he did so he would be sacrificing not only what is right but what is essentially true and beautiful, and thereby defacing and ruining his life. He knows that in maintaining his moral principles he is living a full, coherent, and noble life ; hence his happiness.

The Greek conception of morality as "the beautiful"—which is the most precious legacy of Aristotle to the Church—is thus adopted and expanded by the Christian mystic.

Goodness is beautiful in his eyes, not because it consists in a romantic and patriotic devotion to the welfare of his city, but because Goodness is inseparably united with beauty and truth in the life

of the Word of God. The beauty of goodness is founded on cosmical, not municipal, relationships ; and because the union of the two qualities is based on eternal verities, not on transient social conditions, goodness will still be always and everywhere beautiful, however dull and unpromising or repellent the circumstances under which it is exhibited.

CHAPTER XIV

SYMBOL AND SACRAMENT

THE spiritual man sees in the Eternal Word the unity and the perfection of all things.

It follows that he will discover features of affinity and bonds of union between all the objects that come before him.

Beauty, truth, and goodness are each of them symbolical of the others, because all exist together as a living unity in the Word. So, in whatever department of things the spiritual man may be engaged, he is always in touch with the whole.¹ He knows that the minute subsection of knowledge in which he is engaged is an integral portion of perfect truth, and is thereby also allied to beauty and goodness.

¹ Cf. Dante's beautiful metaphor :

“Nel suo profondo vidi che s'interna,
Legato con amore in un volume,
Cio che per l'universo si squaderna.”
(Par. xxxiii. 85-87.)

“Within its depths I saw ingathered, bound by love in one volume, the scattered leaves of all the universe” (Temp. Cl. Tr.).

His own communion with Christ—that which makes him spiritual—assures him (*a*) of the reality of his own experience, and (*b*) of the kinship between it and other departments of experience. Does it do anything else for him? Yes; it has the further result (*c*), that the universe of his experience does not merely symbolise the perfection as it exists in the Eternal Word, but is also a fresh channel of union with Him.

As we think His thoughts and feel His beauty and receive His goodness, we are drawn to Him along converging paths; these things become means of grace, strengthening and deepening and renewing our union with Him; they are bonds of attraction as well as affinity; they are not only symbols but sacraments. Symbolism is common ground which the mystic shares with the poet and the painter. It is the sacramental attitude to the world which is peculiarly his. The fine arts are full of symbolism; the artist's mind is keenly alive to the "infinite suggestiveness" of things. To the poet "the meanest flower that blows can give thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears;" and such a picture as "Chill October" permeates a scene of Nature with some of the deepest pathos of human life. Symbolism in Art largely consists in reading personal human life into the world of Nature. The lower life suggests the higher to the mind of the artist, and to those who can put themselves on the artist's standpoint. A sort of ideal perfection beyond what is its own is ascribed to Nature when human interests and human joys and sorrows are discerned in it, or

when its strength and regularity are construed into a reproof of human weakness and inconstancy. So, too, symbolism in religion treats Nature and natural objects as suggestive of *Divine* attributes or powers. The shamrock symbolises the Trinity; the pelican symbolises the self-sacrifice, and the phoenix the Resurrection of Christ; the chrisom symbolises the innocence of the newly baptized, the chrism his dedication to priestly service; and all beautiful things symbolise the uncreated beauty in the mind of Him who made them, a beauty akin to His wisdom, which sweetly ordereth all things, and His Love, which was the secret motive of creation.

But we shall not have completed our spiritual education if the variegated universe of our experience merely *reminds* us of the perfection of all its parts in God.

If truth, beauty, and goodness in their perfection make up the very nature of the Eternal Word, then, for the man who is convinced of this, the truth and beauty and goodness of the world are channels of *approach* to God, and have a sacramental character. The more firmly a man is convinced that in Christ the whole being of things is summed up and contained, the more sacramental does the world become to Him. Every act of kindness, every effort after truth, as well as every perception of beauty, is a wave of spiritual motion which thrills through him, up to the living centre of the universe, and brings thence the blessed assurance of God's Presence. The heavens not only declare or symbolise the glory of God to him,

but bring him into immediate contact with God. The rustle of the wind in the trees does not merely symbolise the waving of Angels' robes, but is itself an "angel" speaking God's words to the soul.

But what exactly, after all, is the real difference between symbol and sacrament as thus applied to the universe in its relation to God?

If the world suggests or symbolises spiritual truths, does it not thereby elevate the soul and work upon it with healing power, and in fact endow it with what has just been described as sacramental grace? I answer that there is the same distinction of symbol and sacrament in the whole world of Nature as there is in the case of water, the "matter" of Baptism.

Water, wherever seen, may symbolise the idea of spiritual cleansing, or the washing away of sin; and this is a beautiful and elevating idea, but it is in Holy Baptism that the grace thus symbolised or suggested is actually conveyed. In the same way to a person of artistic temperament the universe may be full of suggestions of a fuller life, of personal life, human or divine; whilst the mystic, to whom the whole goodness of the universe is just an outward manifestation of the Eternal Word, will find therein not mere symbols of higher truths, but direct access to Him who is the Truth. For him ideas are turned into spiritual facts, dreams come true, and aspiration after God becomes an assurance of God's presence. Thus we may say that the symbolical aspect of the world stands to the sacramental in much the same relation as that in which,

as we have seen, meditation stands to contemplation. Meditation withdraws us from earthly things to divine things, contemplation from divine things to God. So here it appears that, in the stage of symbolism, the world as we know it suggests the perfections of the spiritual world; in the stage of sacramentalism it draws us to the Word, as the living centre and the personal reality of that spiritual world itself. In each case there is an advance.

In his detachment from the world and his concentration upon God, the mystic strives to pass upwards from meditation to contemplation; and so now, in his return to the world and his life in the world, he must press on from the merely symbolical to the Sacramental treatment of the world.

In the treatment of symbolism there is an essential difference between art and religion. Art can content itself with being symbolical, religion must press forward to something beyond. It is enough for art to suggest ideas, without tracing their connection or verifying their origin; their suggestiveness is their verification, and their beauty is their sufficient bond of union. They bring us echoes and gleams from some brighter and more ethereal realm, turning the world into "an unsubstantial fairy palace," enriching life with an element of romance and ideality, but not pretending to add to our stock of truth. Religion, on the other hand, is indeed just as susceptible as art to the ideal significance of things. To the mystic, as to the poet, the universe is full of spiritual meaning; but to the mystic this spiritual meaning is not a dis-

covery of his own, something which his genius has read into things. Rather, the world is to him essentially and inherently spiritual, and cannot help having a spiritual significance. What he is concerned with is that these spiritual things with their spiritual meaning shall be channels by which he can pass to the supreme Spirit in whom they have their origin and their connectedness.¹ Whilst the artist begins with material things and invests them with beautiful symbolism, the mystic begins with symbols and ends with sacraments. If he does not thus progress, he is conscious of failure. If he remains in the sphere of symbolical ideas, these ideas become hackneyed and artificial, wearisome and unsatisfying. He does not need to be always assuring himself, or to be assured by others, that the world and man's nature are suggestive of holy ideas; of course they are. What he wants is that they shall be avenues leading him to the source of sanctity.

It is not contended that the mystic is superior

¹ So Dante :

Guardando nel suo Figlio con l'amore,
 Che l'uno e l'altro eternalmente spira,
 Lo primo ed ineffabile valore
 Quanto per mente o per loco si gira
 Con tanto ordine fe, ch' esser non puote
 Senza gustar di lui chi ciò rimira. (Par. x. 1-6.)

'Gazing upon His Son with the Love which the one and the other eternally breathes forth, the primal and ineffable Worth made whatsoever availeth through mind or space with so great order, that whoso looketh on it may not be without some taste of Him" (Temp. Cl. Tr.).

to the artist on the artist's own ground ; rather, my contention is that the ground and scope of the two are quite different. The artist is concerned to *elaborate* the ideas implicit in natural objects, and give them subtle and beautiful expression ; the mystic sees the idea in the thing, and is led by it straight to the presence of God. The former is occupied with the subtle spiritual beauty of his ideas ; the latter with God as the source of all spirituality. The song of the skylark raises a host of exquisite thoughts in Shelley's mind, which have exquisite expression given to them. The mystic merely hears in it the praise of creation ; immediately a door is open in Heaven, and he is " in the spirit " and before the Throne.

It is wonderful how the sacramental principle broadens out as we make use of it. We have already seen that this is so in the case of the inward part, the spiritual grace which is given and received. The " death unto sin," which is the inward gift of Baptism, grows and expands into the process of mortification, and is gradually translated into a fact of personal moral experience. And the feeding upon Christ's humanity, which is the inward gift of the Holy Eucharist, grows similarly into a life of communion, as expressed in meditations and spiritual prayer. And now we see the same sort of expansion taking place in the outward part. Not only water and bread and wine, as in the divinely appointed sacraments, are channels of spiritual access to God. To the devotional mind all the beauty and goodness of God's universe are in their

measure both signs and means of grace. The man of prayer and devotion knows well—his whole spiritual training has taught him—that in Christ dwells the fulness and perfection of all that he is gradually learning, painfully pursuing; that all the *truth* of the universe, all that is not falsified by sin, is comprehended and gathered up in Him, and therefore every item of truth, manifested in knowledge or in action, is a golden thread conducting him to Christ, and conveying Christ's gifts to him.

APPENDIX

PLOTINUS, AND HIS INFLUENCE ON CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM

THE influence exerted by Plotinus on Christian mysticism has been profound and far-reaching. That it has operated both for good and evil will be gathered from the following extracts from his teaching on the ecstatic union with God, or "the One." Many of his statements might with perfect appropriateness have been used by Christian writers; many others have, inappropriately and unfortunately, been adopted by them to the detriment of their systems.

(1) *The Nature of the Vision of God*.—"The One cannot be described in detail, but grasped intellectually; and when we have grasped or touched it we have neither the power nor the leisure to describe it, though we may reason about it afterwards. We may believe that we have seen it whenever the soul suddenly receives light. This is the true light proceeding from the One, and identical with it. We may believe that He is with us whenever a Divine visitation in answer to prayer gives light—light which is not given in the absence of such visitation. So, too, an unenlightened soul may be said to be without that Divine presence (ἀθεος ἐκείνου). But when the soul is enlightened, it has

what it was seeking. And this is the true end for the soul, to touch that light, and see the light by means of the light—not to see it by the light of something else, but to see it by the light which is itself ; for the light which enables us to see is also the object of the vision. We do not see the sun by some other light ” (515 *d-e* ; so, too, 727 *b*). The contemplative “ is carried off on a wave of the intellect, and, borne aloft on its crest, has a moment of sudden insight, he knows not how ; the vision fills his eyes with light ; it does not make him see anything by means of the light ; the light itself is what he sees.”

Moreover not only is the object of sight the same as the medium of sight, but it becomes identical also with the sight itself, *i.e.*, the capacity or act of seeing. “ When a man sees God, everything else is straightway neglected. He is like a man who enters a gaily decorated and beautiful house and gazes with wonder on the various decorations before the master of the house appears. Then, seeing him and his superiority to all these beautiful things, he disregards them and concentrates his gaze on the master. Moreover, as he continues to gaze, averting not his eyes, he no longer sees with steady, unbroken vision, but his eyesight is confounded with its object, so that what was before a thing seen has become the act of seeing ” (726 *b* ; *cf.* 727 *c*).

(2) *God is Omnipresent*.—His visitations do not mean that He comes and goes, but rather that His presence is revealed to the prepared heart. “ He never either comes or goes, but appears and disappears. So it is not necessary to pursue Him, but to remain quiet until He appears, and to prepare oneself to behold Him ” (527 *a*).

“ When the soul is earnestly in love with the One,

she puts aside all concepts, however intellectual. She cannot see Him if she possesses or is occupied with anything else. She must be busied with nothing, good or bad, that she may receive Him (*μόνη μόρον*). When she prospers in this, He comes to her, or rather, reveals His presence on her turning away from her surroundings and preparing herself with all beauty and making herself like to Him—a preparation and adornment familiar to those who practise it; and then she sees Him suddenly manifested in her; there is nothing between them, and they are no longer two but one" (725 a-b).

(3) *The vision itself is immediate contact—an ineffable experience that cannot be described.*—"It is not science which acquaints us with the One nor reasoning, but a revelation higher than science. . . . It cannot be spoken of or written about. When we write or speak on the subject we are merely sending people thither, rousing them by our words that they may see, pointing out the way to him who wishes to behold. We can just teach people the way and the journey; the vision itself is for him who has desired to see. They who can receive Him, and are duly prepared and attuned, so as to touch and grasp Him by likeness and an innate capacity and kinship—being in such a state as when they first came from Him—such people can see Him, as it is His nature to be seen" (761 c-762 a).

(4) *Method of preparation for seeing God.*—(a) God reveals Himself according to our capacity to receive Him, and we gain this capacity by becoming like Him. (See the passages last quoted.)

(b) We must forsake wickedness, sensation, conceptions, and multiplicity.

"We must press towards first principles, raise ourselves above the particulars of sensation, and be freed from all wickedness, since it is towards the good that we are hurrying. We must climb up to first principles that exist in ourselves, and become one instead of many, if we are ever to contemplate the One. . . . In contemplating the One we must add no sensation, and mingle nothing from sensation with that message ; with pure reason, and the primary capacity of reason, we must contemplate the absolutely pure" (760 b-c).

"A man will never come to the vision nor have acquaintance with the transcendent brightness, and will not feel or cherish any consequent passion of love for it, if he climbs up with a burden on his back, an obstacle to the vision. Such a man does not ascend alone ; he brings with him that which separates from God ; in a word, he is not made one" (761 e-f).

(c) So, too, the soul must become formless or empty if it is to receive the One.

"The soul must be formless (*ἀνείδεος*) if there is to be nothing in it which will be an obstacle to it on its way to be filled and illuminated by the primary Nature. If so, it must relinquish everything external and be turned wholly inwards" (765 e).

(d) The process of the ascent is described (556) in language borrowed from Plato's *Symposium*. We are to rise from physical beauty, which is a form in which bodies share from time to time, and from which they pass away. The form comes from the soul. "Is the soul, then, essentially beautiful? No ; souls vary from wise and beautiful to foolish and ugly. Wisdom is given to the soul by *νοῦς* which is essentially beautiful. Still, we must go beyond it ; it stands on the threshold of the good, preaching to us itself the sum of all things,

but being itself a complex figure of the good, which ever remains in unity."

(5) *What, then, is the nature of the One?*—Is a personal deity intended, as the language quoted seems to imply? It is true that Plotinus often used the term *God* as synonymous with the One: but in his precise statements he insists that the One is an abstract unity gained by abstracting all qualities, a pure form of thought, which does not think. Thus we are told definitely that the One does not exercise reason. If it reasoned, something else would be present to it, and it would lapse into multiplicity (534 c). Again, it can know neither itself nor other things, since such knowledge would involve an element of diversity (538 b). This is repeated later (730 d), "He will not know other things nor Himself, but will exist in majesty apart." "And His Providence is adequately expressed in His existence as the source of all things" (730 d).

One would have thought that Christian writers would have at once recognised that such statements were entirely inconsistent with their own conception of the Godhead. In matter of fact, however, the glamour of Plotinus' description of the ecstatic union blinded them, and they are sometimes led to use language utterly at variance with theistic or trinitarian belief.

This is the source from which many Christian mystics derived a negative abstract conception of the Deity, as a blank unity of which nothing should be predicated.

And along with this went the doctrine that the duty of a contemplative was, not to concentrate the complex unity of his being upon the complex unity of God, but rather to abstract himself away into a blank formless unity corresponding to what he conceived to be the divine nature.

This baneful influence, derived from Plotinus, reached the Christian writers through the medium of that strange personality who wrote in the fifth or sixth century, and is known as S. Dionysius the Areopagite. This writer habitually speaks of God as the One ; his dominant view of the sacraments is that they symbolise ¹ the approach of the soul to the One—an approach which consists (a) in purification and illumination, symbolised by baptism, and (b) in perfect knowledge, symbolised by Holy Communion and Chrism (“Eccles. Hier.” v., § 3, p. 234).

Thus, in treating of Baptism, he tells us that the stripping of the catechumens signifies the riddance which the soul makes of all elements of diversity and dissimilarity in approaching the One, since “spiritual beings attain to the unalterableness of the Divine state by earnest aspirations after the One, and complete mortification of all that opposes it” (ibid., ii., § 5, p. 171) ; whilst the clothing of the neophyte after baptism represents “form given to the formless” (τὸ ἀνείδειον εἰδοποιεῖται) “through its eager affection for the One” (ibid., ii., § 8, p. 173). Similarly his conception of Providence is that of a light always shining, ready to enlighten those who open their eyes to it (ibid., ii., § 3, p. 170. Cf. iii., § 6, p. 191, τὸ φῶς ἐνεργεῖ εἰς τὰ δεκτικὰ τοῦ φωτός). So, again, evil is simply weakness, a *deficiency* of good actions and habits, a *failure* to hit the mark, a slipping away from that which is right (ἐλλειψις, ἀρευξία, ἀπολίσθησις. “De Div. Nom.” 4, § 24). Lastly, he insists that the negative way of speaking about God is far truer and better than the positive, and suggests that in removing one attribute after another from our con-

¹ Herein he reverses the true order of thought, which proceeds from symbol to sacrament (see p. 174).

ception of God we act like sculptors who, by removing superfluous material, make manifest the hidden beauty of their design—oblivious of the fact that the negative way negates the existence of any definite conception to be manifested ("Mystical Theol.," chap. ii.).

When we remember the influence exerted by the Dionysian writings on men like S. Gregory the Great and S. Thomas Aquinas, it is easy to understand how it is that the Plotinian method of abstraction occurs so frequently in the works of Christian mystics. One example, of the seventeenth century, may be given from Father Baker's admirable book, "Divine Wisdom." In speaking of the state of perfection in which contemplation culminates, Father Baker remarks, "Some mystic writers do call this perfect union, *the union of nothing with nothing*. The soul, being nowhere corporally or sensibly, is everywhere spiritually and immediately united to God, this infinite nothing" ("Holy Wisdom," iv. chap. 6).

This method, then, of negation and abstraction is one bad legacy of Plotinus to the Christian mystics. Another is Pantheism. Of this latter we have a striking example in the writings of John Scotus Erigena, the bright light of the ninth century, who lived at the court of Charles the Bald, and translated the works of the Areopagite into Latin. We owe a great debt of gratitude to Erigena, not only as a fearless and stimulating thinker, but also as the philosopher who has done more than any one else to give expression to the cosmic significance of Christ's Person.

His doctrine begins with the assertion that the Divine Son is the eternal seat of those *causæ primordiales*, or ideas, which afterwards appear in creation. We naturally expect that these "causes" will be

exhibited as the Divine ideal of truth, and that the Eternal Word, in whom they exist, will be conceived as a Mediator in the sphere of truth between the Father and Creation. But as the theory is developed, we are surprised to find that this mediatorial position disappears, and that both the primordial causes and the Word in whom they exist are summarily identified with creation.¹

The reason of this strange *débâcle* is that to Erigena, as to his master the Areopagite, God is just "the One" of Plotinus; and wherever God is conceived as abstract unity, Pantheism inevitably follows. An abstract One cannot pick and choose between different things; it must be either everything or nothing. In so far as it is regarded as completely *abstract*, *i.e.*, as severed from all determinate qualities, it is nothing. In so far as it is regarded as the *One* source of existence, it is everything. In itself it is nothing in particular; in its results it is everything indiscriminately. Moreover, as we cannot be everlastingly denying this, that, and the other quality of it as a bare abstraction, we are driven to the other alternative of affirming everything of it as the common and indifferent source of the world and all that is in it.² In the Godhead,

¹ *E.g.*, "Non solum in Dei Verbo omnia aeterna et facta esse, verum etiam ipsum omnia facere et in omnibus fieri"; "omnia ubique Deum esse, et totum in toto, et factorem et factum"; "proinde non duo a seipsis distantia debemus intelligere Deum et creaturam, sed unum et id ipsum. Nam et creatura in Deo est subsistens, et Deus in creatura mirabili et ineffabili modo."—"De Divisione Naturæ," book iii. pp. 671-8.

² This process is stated with great precision by Erigena himself: "Divina bonitas quae propterea nihilum dicitur quoniam ultra omnia quae sunt et quae non sunt in nulla

as an abstract One, there can be no distinctions; accordingly the Divine Word, the sum and substance of truth, must be identified with the stream of things which proceed from the One; the Divine ideal is the same as the promiscuous flux of existence, and the result is Pantheism pure and simple.

The Negative Way and Pantheism are thus two characteristic corollaries from the doctrine of the Abstract One. But on the other hand we must ever be grateful to Plotinus for his insistence on three great fundamental principles of mysticism: (a) the inability of this world, however fully and scientifically conceived, to satisfy the human spirit; (b) the existence of a Divine nature beyond and above this world; and (c) the possibility of entering into communion with that Divine nature.¹ In these matters, at any rate, he is giving a consistent development to the principles of Plato. The significance of Platonism is its insistence on the supra-sensible as that in which alone the human spirit can find ultimate satisfaction. It may be perfectly true that Platonic principles are not fruitful for scientific development. We may cheerfully acquiesce in that statement, only adding that scientific development is not fruitful for spiritual progress. Empirical science has developed through its proved power of interpreting the facts of the sensible world, of discover-

essentia invenitur, ex negatione omnium essentialium in affirmationem totius universitatis essentialis a seipsa in seipsam descendit " (Ibid., p. 681).

¹ It may be interesting to quote two illustrations of Plotinus' genius as shown in the sphere of Ethics: (1) "The good is an object of desire: but it is not made good because it is desired, but comes to be desired because it is good" (717 c), (2) "Before we possess the good, we will other things; when we possess it, we will ourselves" (747 c).

ing order and system in the "flux" and "multiplicity" of the world of "becoming." But it makes little difference to Platonism that some of its spectres and bugbears have ceased to startle and perplex; its essential contention remains the same—that the natural world, whether it can or cannot be understood, does not offer a satisfactory resting-place for the human spirit. The natural world "participates in" or "imitates" the higher ideal world. Surely these expressions do not imply alternative theories of natural science; Plato himself states as forcibly as any of his critics the difficulties that meet any such interpretation. They mean simply that to the contemplative mind nature abounds in glimpses and hints of a supra-sensible truth; they mean that this world is a ladder up which the mind ascends to God; they mean that religious mysticism is the very soul and essence of the Platonic philosophy.

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